

# Socialist

A monthly marxist review. No 30. Winter 1999. 50p

# Outlook

# Organise for Livingstone! BREAK FREE FROM MILLBANK MAFIA



Stalingrad O'Neill

Livingstone speaking on the demonstration for Rail Safety on November 6: he is the only candidate to have opposed privatisation of rail and tube.

### See INSIDE:

- EDITORIAL, p3
- Mayoral race, p5

With the politics of New Labour increasingly exposed, the coming year must be a time for the left to build the fight, and organise a systematic challenge to the politics of Blairism, wherever they can be found.

In this context the London mayoral battle has become a touchstone for many Labour activists across the country.

Labour's leaders are still conducting their own gloomy post-mortem on the disastrous electoral consequences of stitching up the electoral college for the Welsh Assembly leadership, and imposing Alun Michael as Tony's chosen one.

But even as they do so, Millbank droids are lining up yet another shambolic and highly visible attempt to foist an unpopular

candidate on an unwilling membership and public.

A successful challenge to this new gerrymandering exercise could begin to stop the rot, and help regain control of the trade union and labour movement.

Let's organise to get Ken selected and elected: let's make it a militant millennium and a Happy New Year for the left!

INSIDE this 20-page issue



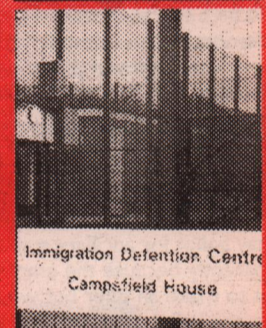
### IRELAND

2 pages of on the spot reports and analysis



### Pakistan

Interview on the situation since the coup



### Fighting racism

2 pages on the key issues



### Chechnya

Two articles on Yeltsin's vicious war



### The Dome

Marking 2000 years of what?

# Why we have to renationalise railways

**By a rail worker**

THE LEFT press has been good in its response to the scandal of rail safety. Socialists have given voice to the outrage felt by millions of people at the neglect and greed, which led to the Paddington rail collision. Privatisation stands exposed, as does New Labour's cop-out: "Public Private Partnership" for the London Underground.

The Third Way is evidently a cul-de-sac from which Blair, Mandelson and friends cannot extricate themselves - or us - without turmoil and upheaval.

I am a Labour Party member, trade union representative and health and safety representative. The members I represent maintain the West Coast mainline from just north of Wigan to just north of Lancaster. Threats against our reps have become two-a-penny since rail maintenance was privatised in April 1996.

## Safety checks

My bosses recently lost an Industrial Tribunal case after they tried to prevent me attending a Health and Safety course. They are also trying to prevent me carrying out 3-monthly safety inspections, despite warnings that they may be about to break the law. They have arbitrarily changed the way track patrols to detect faults are done, despite protests.

Southall, Paddington, Watford, Wansford Junction: just four "accidents" among many in recent years. So far the privatised companies have been lucky - even if the victims haven't. But now the game is up.

Anyone with any decency or intelligence is now clear: privatisation compromises the safety of staff and travelling public.

At such a moment, Railtrack plc and its cronies in the 100-plus contracted companies are vulnerable. A recent Guardian poll showed 70 per cent of people wanting renationalisation. Yet Transport Minister Prescott seems to be allowing the cowboys to buy time until the outrage blows over.



Almost everyone agrees on renationalisation apart from Blair

Obviously Mr Prescott is serious about partnership (even if very few others are) with the likes of Jarvis, whose shares rose 29p in the wake of the Paddington crash - at the prospect of getting a lion's share of the repair contract no doubt.

What credibility can honest members of the Labour Party and trade union movement retain in the face of such inertia - indeed we may even say of betrayal of confidence?

Companies like Tarmac, which got involved in the Tory rail sell-off in order to make a quick killing, have also got involved in a situation where they may contribute to real killings. This firm is not exactly a by-word for safety outside the railways.

Recent statistics show that it has had to pay out more in compensation because of workers killed or injured in its service than have other companies of the same type. This is not a record to inspire confidence from staff or passengers.

Rail's crisis is not unique however. The RMT is still handling the terrible sea disaster which befell 44 of our members on the bulk carrier MV Derbyshire in the Thatcherite 1980s.

We must not lose "the big pic-

ture". The dogmatic drive for profit at any price proceeds apace worldwide.

Yet terrible as the disasters are, the transport crisis presents socialists, and especially Marxists, with one of our greatest ever opportunities. The privatisation of rail was in the 1980s an integral part of the Ridley strategy devised by monopoly capital in the late seventies.

## Competition

The hidden agenda was to nullify or reduce any form of competition to the dominant international car and petroleum manufacturing industries. It is not for nothing that Mrs Thatcher trumpeted the "great car-owning economy". To her, the world had to be made safe for the car-petrol combines and their hangers-on.

Yet now road gridlock and air pollution are leading to global warming, and many other problems have paralysed this hidden agenda. Millions have got wise to it all. Thus the manifestly avoidable disasters on the railways as well as the carnage on the roads and at sea become weapons in our armories against our class enemies.

In Volume One of *Capital* Karl Marx puts his finger on the prob-

lems we still face today:

"Note 55: *Reynolds Newspaper* 21 Jan 1866: Every week this same paper brings a whole list of fresh railway catastrophes under the sensational heading of "Fearful and Fatal accidents" "Appalling Tragedies", etc."

And further "in London three railwaymen - a guard, an engine driver and a signal man are up before a coroner's jury. A tremendous railway accident has despatched hundreds of passengers into the next world.

"The negligence of the railway workers is the cause of the misfortune. They declare with one voice before the jury that ten or twelve years before, their labour lasted only 8 hours a day.

"During the last five or six years, they say, it has been screwed up to 14, 18, 29 hours, and when the pressure of holiday travellers is especially severe when excursion trains are put on, their labour often lasts for 40 or 50 hours without a break. They are ordinary men, not Cyclops. At a certain point, their labour power ran out. Torpor seized them. Their brains stopped thinking, their eyes stopped seeing.

"The thoroughly 'respectable British Juryman' replied with a verdict that sent them to the Assizes on a charge of manslaughter; in a mild rider the jury expressed the pious hope that the capitalist railway magnates would in future be more extravagant in the necessary number of 'labour powers' and more 'abstemious', more 'self-denying', more 'thrifty' in the extortion of paid labour power".

Does this sound familiar? The "capitalist railway magnates" are back again today. They cut staff, connive at increasing hours worked, cut corners to meet 'targets' and impress their shareholders. And they do it with an 'acceptable risk' also - risk to others, not themselves.

It is our task now to stop them, forever. We workers must take everything from them - without compensation - and run things right for the benefit of everyone.

## UNISON fails to warm to 'independent' Prentice

As the nominations period comes to a close on November 26, Roger Bannister, left candidate for General Secretary of UNISON already has more than 50 nominations from a wide variety of branches across the country

His opponent, Dave Prentice claims to be the natural heir of retiring General Secretary Bickerstaffe, but whereas the later got nominations from 12 of the 13 regions of the union, Prentice has managed only 8. Four regions have not nominated a candidate, and London Region decisively supported Bannister by 72 votes to 33.

On the very few occasions where there have been hustings, Bannister has then won the nomination.

Prentice's campaign has been a negative one, trying to paint Bannister as an "extremist", but it is not clear that such a tactic is reaping any fruit. It is true that the position taken by the left and Bannister of opposing the Single Status agreement in local government - based on the levelling down not levelling up of conditions - was not widely understood beyond a layer of activists.

As time goes by, however, it is becoming increasingly clear that what we warned was accurate: the agreement is being used more and more by employers to attack the workforce.

The left and Roger Bannister were also in a minority in pushing for UNISON to call the highly successful demonstration on low pay. The union leadership did everything they could to prevent it being agreed and then to undermine the possibility that it would be a success. However the size of the demonstration - despite it being called in Newcastle - proved that the left is far less isolated than the right would like to believe.

Prentice also claims that he is an 'independent' candidate who owes no one any favours - but he appears to be deeply implicated in the recent decision to call off the pay ballot for ancillary staff in the NHS - apparently because the employers were about to make an offer but wouldn't do so unless the ballot was cancelled. So far there has still been no word from the employers.

All of this demonstrates that despite their best efforts, the witch hunt waged by the bureaucracy over recent years has done nothing to silence the left - or to isolate us from a broader constituency in the union. The Bannister campaign needs to be used to further strengthen our resistance on key issues facing the membership - and the potential that it can do so is already being seen.

## No policies please!

In the meantime as far as London Region is concerned, the UNISON bureaucracy seems less worried about its support for Bannister, and more about its support for Livingstone.

The editor of the Regional bulletin *London Calling* has asked all Labour's Mayoral candidates to write a piece for publication - but only Livingstone was forthcoming. Pressure was then exerted that the article should not be printed: so much for moving the debate onto policy!!

## NEXT ISSUE

THIS ISSUE of Socialist Outlook has a final copy date of November 22. Because of the Christmas and New Year break, our next issue will be produced on the weekend of January 15-16. Any feature articles or letters for publication should be forwarded to us by January 8, at PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU, or by e-mail to us at [outlook@gn.apc.org](mailto:outlook@gn.apc.org).

## Website

Visit the Outlook site on [www.labour-net.org.uk/so](http://www.labour-net.org.uk/so)

# Guards' safety dispute - it's time for the RMT to lead action

For three weeks the RMT dithered. Despite attempts by some Executive members to have the issues discussed, the Rail union failed to act to defend Guards under threat from changes in rail safety rules. Now the rank and file RMT Train Crew Grades Conference has been recalled. It must be allowed to plot a firm course of action to defend its members.

In October, the courts decided to ban the national strike called by the RMT.

This was an attack not just on RMT Guards but on the Union and the whole trade union movement.

Instead of launching a campaign to defend the grade and to oppose this use of the anti-union laws the RMT leadership waited, ostensibly for the full written decision of the judge. In fact, it is

clear that Vernon Hince, the RMT officer in charge, wanted to ensure that the heat went out of the dispute.

This has been his approach all along. But like many of the other false starts in this campaign the membership has had other ideas. Pressure from Branches has forced the Executive to recall the rank and file Grades Conference.

The Conference should be allowed to discuss how we could rebuild our campaign, what new demands can be made and how a resolution of our dispute can be had with each individual train operating company.

In particular we should be launching an offensive to demand guarantees from every TOC that a full primary safety role for Guards be maintained, whatever the Rule Book says.

Failure to produce the appro-

priate guarantees should immediately lead to reopening the strike ballot process with each TOC separately.

This time round we should be preparing in advance to refuse to accept that judges have any right to overturn democratic decisions to take action.

It is time the Union leadership took heed of RMT Annual General Meeting decisions and stood up for the membership irrespective of the legal framework.

From Tolpuddle onwards it has always been necessary to refuse to accept unjust laws.

In the context of the Ladbroke Grove tragedy it is vital that the RMT is seen to be leading the fight for rail safety and it is absurd that the TOCs have been able to posture as defending safety rules against union restrictive practices.

As part of the Guards safety campaign the RMT should launch a people's tribunal on rail safety, in conjunction with the other rail unions if possible, with key independent working class representatives sitting in judgement on the state of the railways, to which rail workers and others can give evidence.

Official government Inquiries may be underway but only an independent workers' enquiry can truly get to the heart of the problem.

Privatisation has been able to eat away at the jobs and conditions of rail workers. The Train Crew grades have shown they can defend themselves better than most, but now face a serious threat.

The strength of feeling is out there - the RMT must be prepared to give a clear lead.

# Time for unions to get tough on New Labour

**I**F ANYONE still cherished the illusion that the New Labour government was merely biding its time or playing its hand cautiously before moving to radical, progressive reforms, Gordon Brown's vicious "Pre Budget" and the right wing package of legislation in the Queen's Speech should have put them straight.

Clearly what distinguishes this government from previous right wing Labour governments is the extent to which it is fully committed to using its massive majority to implement what until recently was seen as a Tory agenda.

Sat on a war-chest variously estimated at between £7 billion and £20 billion of government surplus, Brown has decided to leave the NHS and other public services to struggle. His one gesture towards the poorest pensioners was the proposal for free TV licenses for pensioners aged over 75 - who are already losing the equivalent of £25 per week as a result of the Tory government's decision to link pensions to prices rather than average wages.

The claimed "fairness" consists in even-handed cuts - on the one hand cutting taxes on big business and the rich, on the other cutting the value of pensions, axing the student grants and slashing benefits for the poor and disabled.

New Labour has outstripped the Tories in devising new ways and more draconian regulation to press-gang the unemployed - including single parents and people with disabilities - into low-paid jobs or laughable "training" schemes: but there is more to come.

Brown chose his pre-Budget speech to suggest that unemployed people suspected of "moonlighting" may be called upon to sign on every day for their benefit.

Of course there is no sign of any comparable enthusiasm to get tough with high-flying tax-evaders who as company directors and top bosses defraud the Inland Revenue of hundreds of millions each year.

As *Guardian* economics editor Larry Elliott pointed out, Brown's statement was "heavy on enterprise and light on fairness".

**H**e went on: "In political terms, the aim seems to be to turn Labour into a British version of the [US] Democrats, unashamedly pro-business but leavened by redistribution and the promise of full employment."

It was no accident that Brown's announcement of £100m worth of tax breaks for the wealthiest company bosses came within hours of the government ruthlessly forcing through its brutal cuts in incapacity benefit, slashing back payments for disabled people with income as low as £4,250 a year (£85 per week) - cuts from which previous Tory governments had recoiled.

But New Labour is seeking other, perhaps even more Dickensian, ways to "get tough" with the poor. Jack Straw's savage application of the new Asylum laws will further impoverish refugees, while new jails are being built to bang up even more asylum seekers.

One plan unveiled in the Queen's Speech was that unemployed offenders who fail to comply with community sentences could have their benefits cut for four weeks - a knee-jerk policy which could simply push them back into crime.

And ministers have kow-towed to reactionary public prejudice against people with mental illness: trading on stereotype views of mental illness sufferers as potentially dangerous and violent, Health Secretary Alan Milburn plans to change the Mental Health Act to enable the compulsory treatment of

patients in the community, offering no guarantees of patients rights.

Few of Labour's right wing policies are balanced by even a hint of liberalism or progressive reform: the much-vaunted Freedom of Information Bill is so restricted in application that it has generated a storm of hostile comment from campaigners.

Police powers are to be further increased with a new anti-terrorism bill, while even the police are wary of Jack Straw's plan for them to carry out mandatory drugs tests on all 500,000 people arrested each year. The right to trial by jury will also be curtailed - and it doesn't take a genius to work out whether this will have most effect on richer or poorer defendants.

The only gestures towards a more liberal regime are in the proposal to reduce the age of consent for gay sex to 16 and the long-awaited abolition of Section 28.

Whether it be on matters of economic or social policy, the government's drift is consistent - it has stepped into the shoes and taken on the mantle of the Tories, adorned (as is "one nation" Toryism) with the empty rhetoric of "partnership", and "social justice".

Since it came to office, New Labour has openly set out to establish itself as the natural party for big business.

While brazenly stealing many traditionally Tory policies, Blair and Brown have been

able to exploit the demoralisation and disorientation of the Tory Party.

Tory weakness has been compounded by William Hague's increasingly extreme line of opposition to the Euro, which isolates the Conservatives from key sections of their former business backers.

But Labour's arrogant disregard for the aspirations of its core supporters also rests on demoralisation and disorientation in another quarter.

The trade union leaders, whose political funds bankrolled Blair and whose block votes helped him seize control of the party, scrap Clause 4 and push through his abolition of internal democracy, have done nothing to protest as New Labour turns its back on unions and union members.

A few scraps have been contemptuously thrown in their direction - the minimum wage (albeit at a pitiful level), the minimal

new rights to union recognition in the workplace: but they are now in the past.

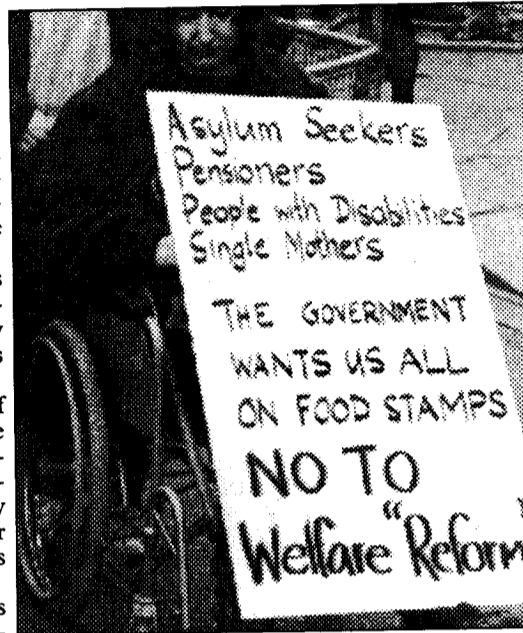
Union chiefs are already struggling to justify Labour's support for privatisation of Air Traffic Control and the London Underground, the costly nonsense of the Private Finance Initiative in the NHS and education, the cash starvation of key public services, Brown's insulting 75p per week increase for pensioners, the imposition of student fees - and a host of other unacceptable measures. But ministers are sticking up two fingers - and demanding even more.

Make no mistake: union bureaucrats are still key to Blair's control of the Labour Party.

Predictions that the electoral college voting on the London mayor may possibly turn up a victory for Dobson rely on the determination of union bosses to suppress democracy in their own ranks - whether (as in the Welsh Assembly) by casting old fashioned block votes as directed by Millbank, or, as with MSF, conniving to ensure that their members' votes are excluded.

If New Labour is allowed to press ahead towards Blair's goal of a US-style Democratic Party, the union leaders will - by commission or omission - have played the crucial role in politically gagging the organisations they claim to represent. They must be challenged at every level.

With the London mayoral battle as a touchstone for many Labour activists across the country and the politics of New Labour increasingly exposed, the coming year must be a time for the left to redouble its effort to stop the rot, build the fight, and organise a systematic challenge to the politics of Blairism wherever they can be found.



## Millbank creates another fine mess

**THE SAGA** of the first ever contest for London Mayor is reaching epic proportions. Ken Livingstone has finally made it onto the shortlist but the deadline for Labour's electoral college has been extended until February - almost tripping over the election itself.

Even the Tories, forced to rerun their contest after Archer's withdrawal over yet more sleaze will have selected their second candidate before New Labour has chosen its first.

Tony Blair launched a vitriolic - and at times almost incoherent - attack on Livingstone just after the shortlist was agreed. Despite their best endeavours to vilify Livingstone and his record at the GLC, the London electorate refuse to be dissuaded from supporting a candidate who opposes Tube privatisation.

It is this popular support - and the clear indication from the polls that it would be maintained even if Livingstone were to stand as an independent - that forced the Blairites to concede him a place on the shortlist.

Of course they dressed it up - claiming that chivalrous Dobson had insisted that Ken should be allowed on. Well, of course he did - but why? Precisely because he would have looked completely foolish if Livingstone had been excluded, stood as an independent and won.

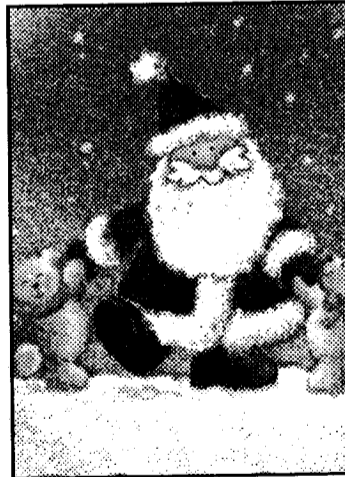
At this point, the outcome of the electoral college itself is not clear. Millbank clearly think they need more time to win. On the other hand on the lengthened timetable, it may be more difficult for them to keep up the exclusion of key trade unions - for not paying 1998 subscriptions in time.

Nor does their cry that they want to focus the discussion on policies ring very true. They are not winning the key battle on transport - and even if the memory of Paddington fades a little it is difficult to see what further manoeuvres they can try to win further ground here.

They can't try to use the General Election manifesto which is broad enough to encompass Livingstone's suggested - and London's preferred option.

Margaret Hodge's attack on Livingstone for tokenism in his policies for women rings more than a little hollow from the woman who single handedly demolished nursery provision in Islington when she was council leader - while herself hiring a nanny.

The Labour loyalists led by Michael Cashman, have tried a clumsy attempt to pin the blame on Livingstone for the introduction of Section 28, saying that it was his "extremism" that led the Tories to introduce this legislation. But this seems instead to have reminded many lesbians and gay



*Millbank's skillful repackaging of Frank Dobson has already begun*

men that Livingstone was prepared to support them when few others - and certainly not the party leadership - were.

From this point of view, not to mention the sickening and repressive statements on crime coming from the front bench, and with the tube as the number one issue, it is wrong of Livingstone to suggest that there are no differences with the leadership on any other matters.

Further, his written submission to the reconvened panel on November 18, was like too many of his previous statements, ambivalent - in this case about

what he meant by saying he would stand on the Manifesto agreed by the Labour Party.

Of course it is right that there needs to be a major battle over that manifesto; that Labour Party members and trade union levy payers in London should be demanding the widest possible consultation - and the extension of the deadline to allow maximum possible debate.

But the lesson of Blair's leadership indicates that while the left have been successful sometimes in having our people elected we have not succeeded - even when we have a majority at the base - in imposing our policies.

And given that this issue will go to a Policy Forum on which the Blairites have a clear majority it seems unlikely that this could be any different.

In this context it is important that those who were making plans to stand socialist candidates for the Assembly election continue to do so.

Of course this must go hand in hand with the key task of mobilising the biggest possible vote for Livingstone within the electoral college. And of course we must also fight to ensure that responses to the consultation on the Manifesto take a clear line opposed to PFI/PPP as well as arguing for progressive policies throughout.

# Winter crisis looms for cash- strapped NHS

**Harry Sloan**

Unlike Frank Dobson, new Health Secretary Alan Milburn doesn't even look like Father Christmas: and health workers know to their cost that he does not come bearing gifts.

Estimates vary on the exact size of the growing mountain of cash deficits confronting NHS Trusts and health authorities. A recent poll by NHS financial managers conservatively estimated that - partly under the impact of pay pressures, millennium costs and the European working time directive - the national shortfall could be £200 million.

This appeared suspiciously low when compared with a survey by London Health Emergency of fewer than half of the capital's Trusts, which revealed deficits of £62m - suggesting that the capital's NHS alone is over £100m in the red - and the revelation that one London health authority, Merton, Sutton & Wandsworth is closing wards as it struggles with a £20m deficit.

Stephen Thornton of the NHS Confederation representing Trusts and health authorities guessed that the eventual figure may be as high as £400m, while the *Guardian* headlined a warning of a £1 billion deficit by next April.

However large the shortfall, the pressures are mounting as the NHS - with staff and services stretched to the limit - heads into the winter period which traditionally brings a peak in demand for emergency admissions.

After years of bed cuts, more beds have already begun to close through a combination of cash problems and staff shortages. When the first cold night of the autumn struck early in October, hospitals in many parts of the country immediately ran out of beds to admit emergency patients.

Even the usually Millbank-friendly *Guardian* has strayed "off message" to urge Labour to come up with another winter emergency package of extra cash to avert embarrassing problems in the NHS.

Milburn has tried to shrug off the cash crisis: but he faces a massive credibility gap not only with health workers and the wider public, but even with NHS chiefs.

A recent opinion poll of over 200 NHS managers for the *Health Service Journal* found that three quarters of them did not expect to get the resources, staff or training they require to deliver the growing list of government "priorities".

The poll also revealed a dramatic contrast between their priorities as NHS managers, and what they perceived to be government priorities: for example 77% of managers thought staff shortages to be a major issue, but only 23% of them thought ministers had the same view.

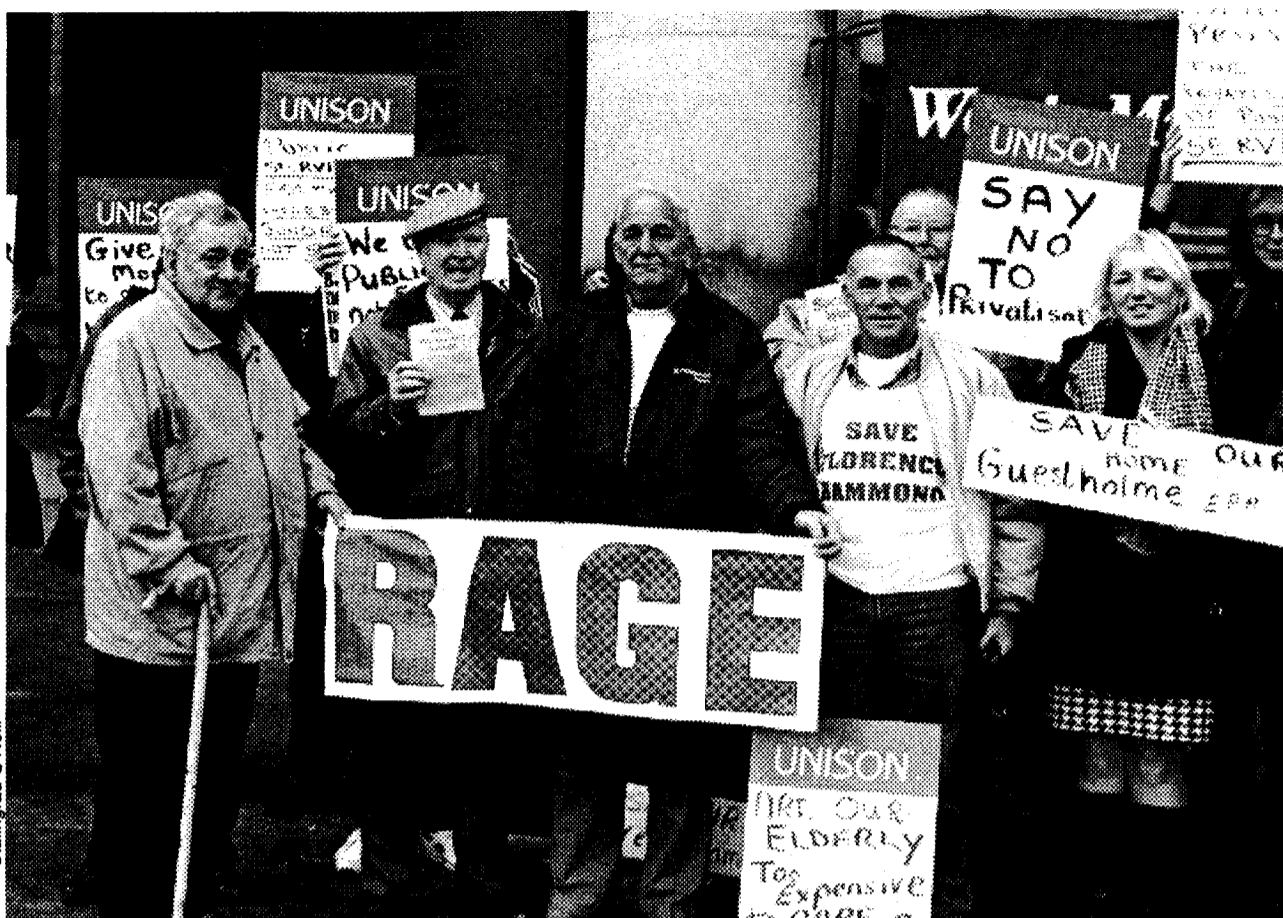
Perhaps the most ridiculous contrast is between the tiny handful (7%) of managers who regard the government's much-touted "NHS Direct" phone advice line as important, compared with the 63% who recognise that it is a service avidly promoted by ministers at every opportunity.

There are also signs that the interests of GPs seeking to balance the books of the newly-created Primary Care Groups can run sharply counter to those of NHS hospital Trusts, and potentially threaten their financial viability.

And as cash pressures mount, with PCGs running into deficit on their drug budgets, some GPs are openly debating economies that would save money by prescribing second-choice drugs for patients.

It didn't have to be like this: the instant access to cash for the Kosova bombing campaign and rumours of a £12 billion Treasury pre-election "war chest" are a reminder that the government has choices - and the resources - to pay the health workers, stop the cuts and cut the waiting lists.

Isn't it time the left turned up the heat to help make them do so?



Privatisation is not just a threat hanging over the London tube and air traffic control. Birmingham campaigners are among those fighting new steps to privatise care of the elderly. Meanwhile the government has maintained its constipated silence in response to the Royal Commission on long term care of the elderly, which recommended an end to means-tested charges for nursing care.

# 400 Scots debate at Socialism 2000

**Gordon Morgan**

Over 400 socialists attended a weekend of discussions organised by the Scottish Socialist Party on November 6-7. The conference attracted a wide spectrum of the left in Scotland, not just SSP members, but also Labour, SNP and unaligned.

The range of speakers was very impressive and reflects the increasing standing the SSP holds within Scotland and by repute internationally.

The weekend itself comprised a series of plenary sessions and workshop discussions which began to explore in detail responses to some of the complex issues facing Scottish socialists and trade unionists.

Everyone I spoke to agreed that the conference had been a success and had helped consolidate the leading role of the SSP within the Scottish left.

The weekend was the first major discussion forum of the SSP since the Scottish and European Elections. The first session on Friday was a rally with Tommy Sheridan MSP, Dennis Canavan MSP, Margo Macdonald SNP MSP, the Anwar Chokar Family Justice Campaign and others. This was followed on Saturday morning by a discussion on Socialism & Nationalism which included Labour MSP John McAllion.

These sessions drove home the point that in Scotland socialists in different parties - SNP, Labour and SSP - have more in common than divides them, and that they can unite in common cause on many issues inside as well as outside Holyrood.

John McAllion made the point that the Cuban Revolution was both nationalist and socialist. The need was to build democracy in Scotland. There were socialists in the LP although not in great numbers. The left was defeated by an establishment coup, not the voters.



Rallying the left: Dennis Canavan proves there can be real life after deselection

PR had given voters freedom to vote for parties and candidates they wanted: two-party politics is finished. Socialists in the Labour Party must fight now, the argument to wait until after the next General or Scottish Election no longer applies.

If after 2 years of fighting the leadership the left find they have been defeated then they must draw the lessons and leave. His son is in the SSP.

Several hours were spent in a plenary and workshops on Ireland. Sinn Fein, the Socialist Party, Women's Coalition and the Progressive Unionist Party were on the platform, and Socialist Democracy also led a workshop.

The largest workshop was led by Billy Hutchison of the Progressive Unionist Party. It was the first time many had had an opportunity to discuss with the PUP and many were interested to hear how a current leader of

the UVF could still claim to be a socialist.

His hatred of the leaders of 'big house Unionism' was clear, and he expressed admiration for and claimed to have copied methods of community organisation from Sinn Fein, to have his family at integrated schools and to be promoting anti sectarian and anti fascist policies within the PUP. Many questions remain.

The issue of PFI is critical in Scotland. Edinburgh Royal Infirmary (RIE)

has been "PFI'd", and come under enormous criticism not least from the Scottish Parliament and the controller of Audit.

Glasgow is about to enter a disastrous PFI deal for all its schools as well as effectively trying to dispose of its stock of 100,000 houses. The SSP is involved at community, trade union and political level against all PFI schemes and the UNISON secretary from RIE and others discussed approaches to this.

Social Partnership schemes are attempts to incorporate union leaders and stewards into restructuring proposals. Some lessons on the effects and dangers as well as limited successes in opposing these were discussed, however further meetings on both topics are necessary and will be organised

The final session on the Satur-

day was on international socialism, and speakers included Ken Coates, the Danish Red Green Alliance and Alain Krivine of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, French Section of the Fourth International.

Ken Coates spoke of the need to build a comprehensive peace movement. He argued that a cold war is restarting and we need to start a movement across Europe - hold a conference of the left.

The Danish Red Green alliance have 5 seats in a 179 seat parliament with similar votes to SSP and Greens in Scotland but a fairer PR system. They feel that the EU cannot be reformed, it must be dismantled and we should work for a democratic alternative of European countries co-operating together. We should form an alliance to combat Neo Liberalism.

Krivine was the best received speaker of the day. He analysed the state of the European left, decline of European Social Democracy, the failure (with exceptions) of Communist parties and the beginning of a recomposition on the left with space to build a broad party.

We need to co-ordinate - organising internationally is key task facing revolutionaries, he argued, to warm applause.

The final session on 'do you need to be Red to be Green' reflects the fact that the SSP has been active on anti motorway, anti hunt, and anti GM foods campaigns as well as local campaigns against toxic dumps.

The Greens and the SSP essentially agree on most issues although there is a distinctly pro science strand of some SSP members. Discussions on GM foods in particular are always lively.

The conference closed with the Internationale, with general agreement that it had been a success and a resolve to make the

# Listen to London - stop Tube sell off!



Standing firm: women strikers

## Solidarity against Lufthansa, not pie in the skyl

Delegations from the USA, Denmark, France, Germany and Spain were among the several hundred people who attended a meeting to mark the first anniversary of the dispute involving 247 sacked Skychef workers on November 20.

The Rally, convened by the TGWU's London Region was addressed by General Secretary Bill Morris who as usual said he would not let the strike be defeated, but little else.

Mayoral hopeful Ken Livingstone said that if he were elected he would instruct all the bodies controlled by his £3 billion budget to boycott Skychef's parent company, Lufthansa, and that his first civic duty would be to take the London Assembly down to the picket line!

Two strikers spoke, and in a strike involving large numbers of Asian women it was the woman speaker who got the longest ovation of the rally.

The international delegates had been attending a meeting convened by the ITF of unions representing LSG Skychef workers: they made it clear that the British dispute is not the result of one renegade manager.

The TGWU national secretary said that the union would now turn the pressure on other companies at Heathrow that were using Skychefs, including American Airlines, Air France and Quantas.

Despite a promise on leaflets that the rally would allow debate, it was bureaucratically organised to ensure that only pre-selected speakers were heard. The only space for any kind of questioning of the way the TGWU is handling the dispute came during the collection. Mick Whitley from Region 6, donating £1,000, argued that solidarity action was needed as well as donations. Another donor called for a one-day TGWU strike. But nobody mentioned the obvious call on unions at Heathrow to refuse to handle the scab-produced food - no doubt because of the TGWU's fear of breaking the law.

There was a call from the floor for unions in firms like Rover, where delegations of workers are continuously using Lufthansa, to try to change this policy.

One striker protested that all the opinions of their supporters were not heard at the rally, but the chair simply turned to attack those "who want to split the strikers from their union".

The lesson of the Liverpool dockers, Hillingdon and other long-running strikes is that union leaders are more determined to keep control in their own hands than they are to fight the employers.

## Hotline for Ken

Ken Livingstone's campaign for the Labour nomination now has a central London office:

Phone 020 74362702

Fax: 020 74367167

If you are a supporter of Ken Livingstone's campaign and would like to help out don't hesitate to get in touch!

Ken Livingstone has quite rightly made the future of London Underground the foremost issue of his Mayoral campaign. The fight is now on to get a London Labour Manifesto that reflects the wishes of Londoners.

The catalogue of failings that became the Ladbroke Grove disaster has highlighted why Railtrack cannot be allowed to take over the tube.

The government's Public Private Partnership is, in the words of the three rail unions united campaign, Listen to London, "an expensive folly that will fail to meet the needs of Tube users". This is why 66 per cent of tube users believe that the Underground should be adequately supported by public funding and not given away to private companies.

It is hard to find out who actually supports tube privatisation, apart from Blair, Brown, Prescott and the fat cats who will get the cream of the profits. Even the Parliamentary Transport Select Committee, majority New Labour, was forced to recognise, "that the Treasury rules have forced the adoption of PPP, which is rather a convoluted compromise, when other financial solutions might have been more effective."

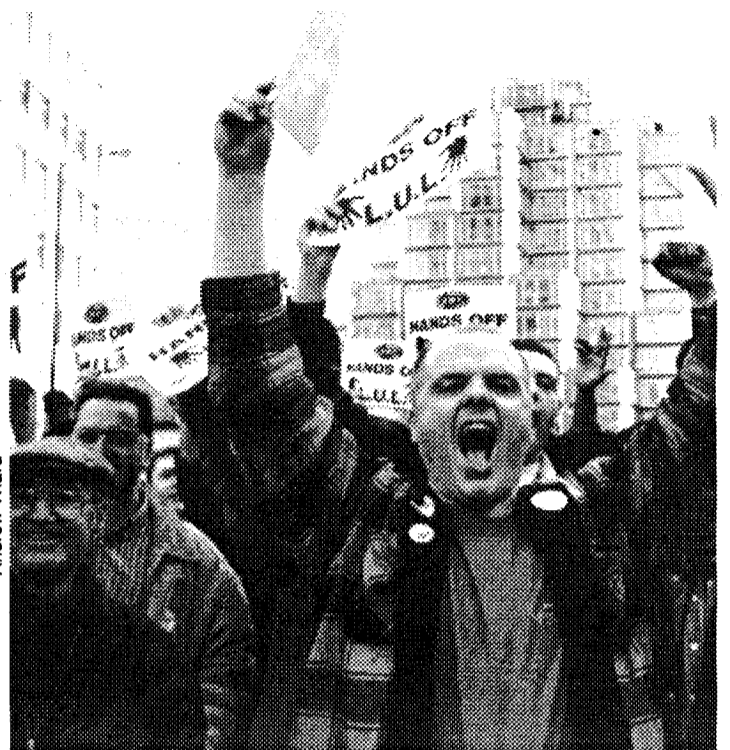
Which is a polite way of saying that handing the tube over to Railtrack and others will cost over £8 billion more than merely borrowing the money for investment directly. Throwing away all this money does not even remove the current uncertainty over funding it was meant to resolve.

But at least the service will improve. No such luck. Whilst the Select Committee has warned that fares will have to rise and service levels decrease to pay for Railtrack's profits, we can already see Railtrack's record on the mainline railways. Delays have risen, broken rails are up by 21 per cent, and other standards of maintenance have fallen, leading to passenger complaints reaching record levels. The only thing that continues to improve is the value of Railtrack shares.

At a recent hustings meeting for the Mayoral candidate selection, organised by the rail unions, Glenda Jackson tried to defend the government position. She at least had the bottle to turn up whilst Frank Dobson hid round the corner in "a private meeting with supporters". She made two claims - firstly that there was no other option for raising investment, and secondly that the tube was not being privatised at all.

On the first point it is true that the government interpretation of its own Treasury rules makes other options impossible. But, of course, it could always change its rules. In fact, it has already done so with the decision to issue bonds to fund the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.

And the second point got a clear response from the six hundred tube workers. Whatever the government says about who ultimately owns the tube, their jobs will be transferred to the private sector. And the experience of mainline rail workers shows what will be in store for them - a consistent drive to maximise



Tube workers have been saying it loud and clear for ages!

profits by cutting wages, jobs and conditions.

This is why the rail union leaders campaign of polite lobbying of the government has to be combined with a more forthright campaign based on the rank and file tube workers themselves, and why all socialists should be supporting their Campaign Against Tube Privatisation. Clearly, the unions' Listen to London campaign is right to call on the government to "think again". The determination of Labour's Manifesto for London must be made a central part of

that campaign.

But it would be wrong to put all our eggs in that basket. Even were Ken Livingstone to be successful in winning the Labour nomination and even if London Labour members vote to make a halt to tube privatisation part of their manifesto there is no guarantee that this will be the position that goes forward into the election. Tube workers have to maintain their independent political campaigning and also prepare for industrial action, if necessary, to force the government to back down.

## MSF leaders step up their witch-hunt against London left - and Livingstone

### Terry Conway

ONE OF the manoeuvres in the desperate battle to prevent Ken Livingstone becoming Mayor of London has been the debarment of four unions from the electoral college set up on October 12.

And, what a surprise, MSF, RMT, ASLEF and BECTU were all thought likely to cast their votes for Ken.

The exclusions were supposedly for late payment of affiliation fees - a fair enough reason you might think. Well certainly that was what you were supposed to believe: but the reality is a little more complex.

Firstly it is absolutely common practice for affiliation fees to be paid late. In any event in the case of MSF, by the time it was excluded from the electoral college on October 21 both its 1998 (in July 1999) and 1999 (in October 1999) fees had been paid. The cheque sent in July had not been returned, and the union had been treated in all other ways as an affiliated union.

Secondly there is a complete difference between the way individual members have been treated and the attitude taken to trade union levy payers.

Margaret McDonagh, General Secretary of the Labour Party, wrote to CLP Secretaries recently urging them to assist the party in chasing up members in subscription arrears and



No votes for MSF: Roger Lyons extending the deadline for doing so until November 5.

She argued that this needed to be done so that the widest number of members could have their say. Indeed the electoral college was treated as an opportunity to get in back subscriptions - including from 1998 - from individual members.

This has rightly been taken up by both the RMT and activists in MSF to highlight the fact that their exclusion should be overturned.

Within MSF, the late payment has been used in a despicable way by General Secretary Roger Lyons and the National Executive Committee to refuel their long standing witch-hunt against the left in London region.

The first most MSF members knew about what was going on was when their General Secretary proclaimed in the media that they had been deprived of

their votes - not because of unfair rules imposed by the Labour Party, but incompetence from Regional Council Secretary Hugh McGrillen!

This public abuse continued for days, and was followed by a circular to the London membership - probably costing around £5000 - again denouncing lay officers.

This was done without any attempt either to find out the real facts of the situation - or, even more importantly to get the votes back. For a union that claims to have such influence with the government and party, the priorities were clear. Not to defend the rights of members but rather to attack the left.

### Legal advice

In the meantime the London Region Management Committee of MSF had agreed to seek legal advice as to whether the Labour Party's decision to exclude them could be challenged. It was made clear at the meeting that no union funds would be used and that at this stage no action be taken.

After seeking a written opinion from a barrister, it seemed to the Regional Secretary that there was a very strong likelihood that the decision could be challenged - but only if he acted quickly - before ballot papers were issued.

At this stage, after informal consultations with as many peo-

ple as possible, he asked his solicitors to write to the Labour Party stating that the decision should be rescinded.

At this point the MSF leadership who had effectively been silent for nearly two weeks sprang into action - not to add their weight to the plea to restore democracy - but to throw further vitriol on the head of McGrillen.

Despite the fact that written assurances were given by both Hugh and the Regional President, Susan Michie, that no union funds were involved, the National Executive Committee on November 13 suspended the three principal officers of the Regional Council, froze its funds and launched an investigation into the preceding actions.

While they claim they want the matter dealt with speedily it is more than a little convenient that all this may well mean that the three suspended members are ineligible to stand for office at next year's AGM.

London Regional Council of MSF on November 20 overwhelmingly passed a vote of confidence in all its officers, called for the suspensions to be lifted and, most importantly called on the NEC to concentrate on getting back the votes of our members.

In the meantime, six individual members are pursuing action in the courts to see if the decision to exclude can be overturned.

Letter from Satpal Ram in prison

# Free Satpal - forgotten victim of institutional racism



Stalingrad O'Neill

Lesbian and gay rights

## Two steps forward

**Terry Conway**

At one level the last few weeks has been breathtaking in terms of lesbian and gay politics. First there was the victory in the European Court against the ban on lesbians and gay men serving in the military - a victory for civil rights - if not one most of my friends would have any wish to exercise.

The media gave a lot of exposure to the story about the two British gay men who were having surrogate twins - at a cost that most lesbians in particular must have shuddered to read.

### Certificate

The victory there was the right, won in a US court, of the pair to have their names on the birth certificate.

Still, it's not a path that many of either gender could afford to go down whether or not we want to. More significantly, in the area that remains most taboo for lesbians and gay men was the statement of Dame Elizabeth Butler Sloss, President of the high court family law division who in October said that children could be successfully brought up by gay couples.

The most significant decision however came with the redefinition of "family" by the law lords following the battle of a gay man over succession rights. On October 29, Martin Fitzpatrick won a ruling that he could inherit his partner's tenancy. Legal experts have stated that the ruling can be the basis for challenges in other areas of the law where the concept of "family" is used.

Many on the left may assume that the right to inherit is only important to the ruling class. They take for granted that property - including a home bought or rented jointly - will go to a surviving partner. They do not expect that people will fight over things with little material value but great emotional significance.

But that is not the experience of many lesbians and gay men, who despite relationships that may be decades long are spurned - sometimes by their partners biological family, sometimes by the state - and sometimes by both.

This is difficult to deal with at the best of times - but when the grief of losing a lover is compounded by becoming homeless, for example, it is truly heart-breaking.

As a child of the sixties, I still hesitate to redefine the family because I would prefer to replace it in a way that was much broader than pairs of lovers of whatever gender, with or without children.

### Victory

Despite this, it is clear that the court decision is an important victory - which will materially improve many people's lives - and undermine the homophobia suffered by far more.

These victories, and others - for example in the immigration field, were the results of long battles. These not only involved the individuals now in the news and their supporters, but countless others who wage the same or

similar battles previously but were not successful.

The most recent developments in the battle for lesbian and gay rights - the announcements in the Queen's speech that section 28 will be abolished and the age of consent equalised are also the product of long campaigns. (though marred by the introduction of the so-called protection of minors law being brought in alongside it)

### Abolition

The abolition of Section 28, already agreed in Scotland, is a huge victory. Though no cases have been brought under the act, it has resulted in self-censorship by local authorities. If anyone doubted its impact then just look at the rate of suicide amongst young lesbians and gay men denied not only positive images but any images at all.

But there is a key area in which campaigners are disappointed by the Queen's speech and determined to put a good deal of further energy - the absence of proposals for comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. It remains perfectly legal at work and in the provision of goods and services to discriminate against lesbians and gay men.

The government has suggested a voluntary code of conduct but this will do nothing to change the situation - those that will implement it are not the ones that sack us! The battle will continue - with new energy from these recent successes.

### Dear Friends

On the 12 December 1997 the parole board rejected my application for parole. I have served an additional two years over my tariff and I have a new parole hearing in December!!! of this year 1999.

I have now served over 13 years in prison primarily for defending myself against a

### Messages of support E-mail:

FreeSatpalRam@ncadc.demon.co.uk

PS: All e-mails are snail mailed to Satpal twice weekly. In your e-mails please include your town and country.

Free Satpal Ram web site <http://www.ncadc.demon.co.uk/satpal.html>. Asian Dub Foundation Satpal Page <http://www.asiandubfoundation.com/satpal/>

racially motivated attack.

During this time I have consistently challenged the very basis of my conviction, my last appeal having been rejected in November 1995.

Clearly, had the parole board based their decision on an interpretation of the facts then I should not be in prison today.

I have already served the sentence which was imposed upon me by the then Chief Justice, Lord Lane, who recommended that I serve 10 Years in prison. This tariff expired in November 1996.

I am now being made to serve an additional sentence. To put my situation into perspective I have been the victim of two racist attacks.

The first occurred back in November 1986 when I was forced to defend my life against an assailant who stabbed me with broken glass, after subjecting me to a torrent of racial abuse.

The second has been a sustained attack by the British State. Right from the very onset of my involvement within the criminal justice system.

My arrest at the hands of the police, my subsequent trial and conviction by the judiciary and lastly my treatment at the hands of the penal system.

During my time in prison I have suffered many indignities and hardships the abuse and maltreatment that I have had to endure and the injustices which have been perpetrated against me amount to a flagrant violation of Human Rights.

I have been put through a process where I have been systematically abused. I have been frequently transferred (Ghosted) from prison to prison, having to date been moved 59 times. (the average inter prison movement for lifers is 6)

I have endured years of mental cruelty, I have often been held in total isolation in solitary confinement, having to endure prolonged periods of deprivation, psychological abuse, constant intimidation, starvation diets and physical torture.

On numerous occasions I have been shackled in a body belt and thrown into strip cells having to sleep on the floor cold and naked for days on end. The guards often display sadistic tendencies and specialise in humiliation and degradation they often enforce their own rules by terrorising those within their grasp.

It is against this background that I have spent many years protesting against my wrongful conviction. I feel that I have suffered in more ways than one and that I should now be released from prison.

My continued imprisonment is totally unjustifiable and goes against the principles of natural justice. I would ask anyone concerned with justice to support me in my fight for freedom.

**Satpal Ram**

**Frankland Prison,  
November 1999**

## Reel injustice of Met racism

**Veronica Fagan**

There I was in the middle of a shop in Amsterdam on November 9, shrieking with delight. People looked at me askance. You see, I'd just picked up that day's *Guardian* and there on the front page was the announcement that the Inquest into Ricky Reel's death had agreed with the long campaign of the family to show that this was no accident.

Yet again, the racism of the Metropolitan Police was exposed.

Even after the Lawrence inquiry, few lessons are being learnt by the powers that be.

It still takes an enormous amount of energy from dedicated campaigners, usually with the family at the centre to prove what was obvious at the outset - that yet another black person, someone else's

child, someone else's loved one - has been the target of a racist murder.

The grief of loss is compounded many times over by the absolute failure of the police to take anything you tell them seriously. They are the experts - you the grateful victims.

### Abuse

Despite the fact that Ricky and the three friends he was with had been subject to racist abuse and been chased by white youths, the police refused to take seriously the worry of the Reels when Ricky had no returned home the next morning.

His body was not recovered for a week after his disappearance on October 14 1997 and then only after the family spent 16 hours a day scouring the Kingston area where he was last seen.

Then the police maintained that he must have

fallen into the river while urinating - despite assurances that he was afraid of open water.

Anyone who has heard his mother, Sukdev speak could not help be moved by her commitment - and like me jubliant that at last some justice has been done.

Louise Christian, the family solicitor has called for the report of the Police Complaints Authority report into the Met's actions in the case to be made public.

It is an outrage that this report, part of which has been revealed in the Commons and which indicates the detailed parallels with the indifference and incompetence of the police should be secret.

Institutional racism is alive and well - and the Labour government will only do something about it when absolutely forced to do so.

**No more  
Detention  
Centres:  
Stop  
Oakington!**

On October 21 1999, Barbara Roche, Minister for Immigration and Nationality announced plans for yet another detention centre. The Home Office have applied for planning permission to convert Oakington army barracks near Cambridge into a detention centre for asylum seekers

The centre would, when fully operational, be able to accommodate up to 400 asylum seekers, who arrive at ports in the South East and at Stanstead Airport.

Applicants will be required to reside at Oakington under existing Immigration Powers for initial examination of their claim.

Upon their arrival in the UK many asylum seekers are traumatised, some have been tortured and raped. They may not be able to speak the language and have no relatives or friends in the UK.

Britain is a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention and has agreed to provide refuge for those fleeing persecution. It is also one of the richest and most developed countries in the world, whose Government is preaching an ethical foreign policy. But when those in need manage to come through all the obstacles prepared for them - such as visa restrictions, safe third country rule, carriers liability etc. they are faced with the cruelty and humiliation of being put into a detention centre.

On an average day, more than 800 asylum seekers are detained with no judicial oversight of their detention for long periods of time. In Campsfield, Harmondsworth and Tynsley House detention centres, Rochester and Haslar detention prisons and criminal prisons throughout the UK.

■ The current figure for the backlog of asylum claims which were awaiting an initial decision at 30 September 1999 was 90,685. (Hansard written reply Thursday 28 October 1999).

■ The total backlog of immigration and asylum cases, at September 1999 was 149,013 cases. (Hansard written reply Monday 25 October).

■ The Home Office has failed to convince anyone that they are capable of dealing with asylum claims fairly and quickly and they will not manage to deal with an additional 400 detainees.

**Stop  
Imprisoning  
Refugees!**

Plans are afoot for a new centre in Oakington and to replace Harmondsworth with a much larger centre in Feltham.

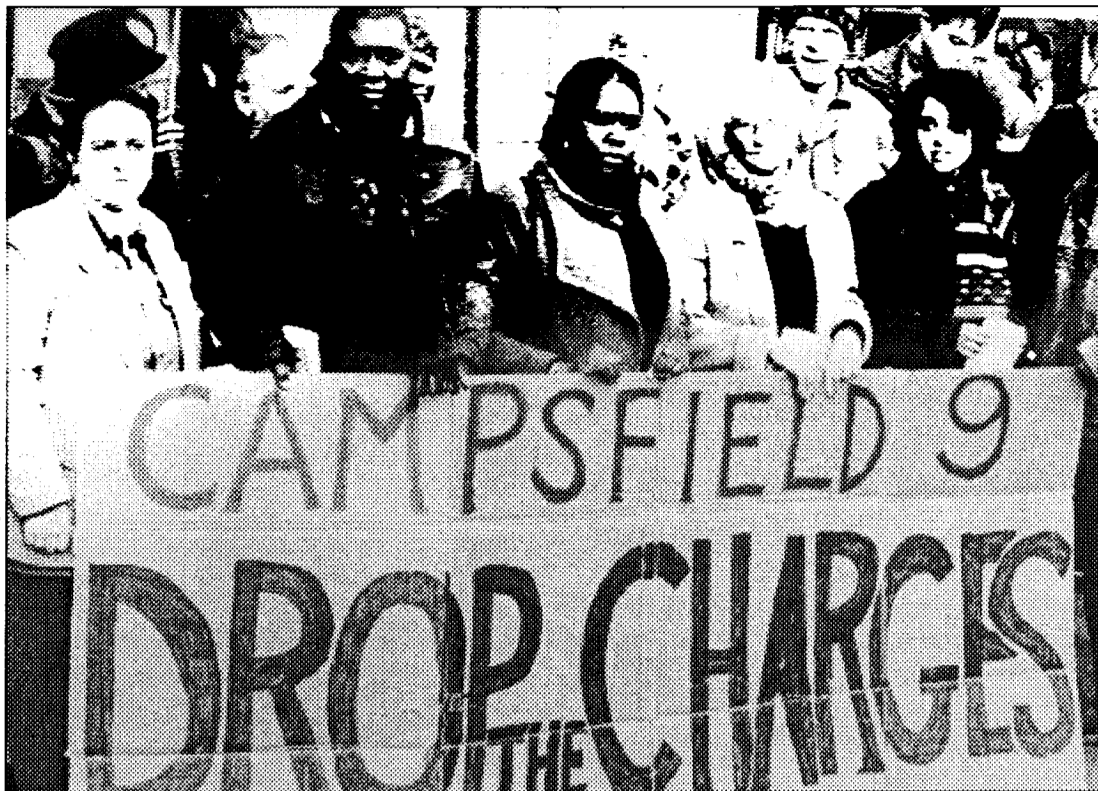
For the last few years the Close Down Harmondsworth Campaign has held a regular Christmas picket to make sure the detainees know that they are not forgotten.

As Eve Turner, speaking for the campaign commented:

"The picket is only one and a half hours of our time, but to the detainees it is a topic of conversation for days. The more noise people make, the greater the morale boost - so please do your best to join us".

■ Thursday 2 December Public meeting Stop Imprisoning Refugees 7pm Ealing Town Hall with John McDonnell MP, Tim Baster ( Bail for Immigration Detainees Group) and an ex-détainée.

■ Saturday 11 December Picket Harmondsworth Detention Centre, 12 noon - 1.30pm Take U3 bus from Heathrow or 81 bus from stop opposite Hounslow West tube station. Bring donations of phone cards to give to refugees or send to Close Harmondsworth Campaign, c/o 52 Norwood Rd, Southall Middlesex.



Stalingrad O'Neill

Six years of misery at Campsfield included a show trial of nine detainees: collapsed when warders' lies were exposed

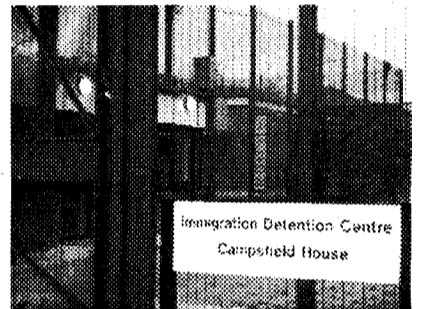
**Refugees  
injured in  
escape  
attempt**

Parminder Kumar, 21, hobbling on bandaged feet cut on the razor wire which tops the 18-foot fence surrounding Campsfield, spoke to Diane Taylor.

He and fellow Sikh Amrik Singh had tried to escape because they were both facing deportation back to the Punjab. Kumar said that the choice facing the two men was a stark one:

"We knew that if our deportation went ahead this country would surely be sending us back home to our deaths. Although escape meant risking injury or recapture it was our only hope. We had both been tortured by police in the Punjab and felt that this escape bid was our only hope".

**Campsfield:  
another  
rooftop protest**



**Veronica Fagan**

ON SUNDAY November 14 at 7.00am, two Asylum Seekers from India climbed onto the roof of Campsfield Detention Centre, an Immigration Detention Centre at Kidlington, six miles from Oxford.

Later in the day they were joined on the roof by another 18 asylum seekers from India. One of the initial protestors had been in detention for 15 months the other 11 months. They argued that they have been in detention far too long and should be released immediately.

They were also complaining against the extortionate bail demands being made by the Home Office. Asylum seekers in Campsfield making bail applications are being required to lodge sureties of £10,000. This is an impossible amount for people who mostly arrive penniless in the UK and who have no friends or relatives rich enough to deposit these outrageous sums.

Campsfield Detention Centre is an abomination against human rights. It is a prison run for private profit by Group 4, supervised by Home Office immigration officials. Six years ago on November 27 1993 the first detainees were admitted. On average there are 180 detainees in Campsfield House. Most are political refugees fleeing danger, torture and even death from countries such as Nigeria, Algeria, Ghana, Turkey, India, Zaire and Eastern Europe.

Many of those locked up in Campsfield, have seen nothing of the UK but airports, prison cells and the backs of Group 4 security vans. The only people they have met are immigration officials, police and security guards.

They are held without charge, without time limit, without proper reasons given, and with-

**Did you  
know?**

Since coming to office New Labour have deported 75,000 people. Now the government's latest laws will disperse other asylum seekers throughout the country to places where they no no-one. They will be given vouchers instead of money and these will be worth on 70 per cent of poverty line income.

out proper access to legal representation. Asylum seeker Karamjit Singh Chahal for example spent over 6 years in prison before he was recognised as a refugee.

Amnesty International reports that there are breaches of internationally recognised human rights. The former Chief Inspector of HM Inspectorate of Prisons (Judge Stephen Tumim) and The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture have condemned conditions at Campsfield.

**Razor wire**

Detainees are held behind a twenty-foot high razor-wire topped fence. Throughout the centre there are surveillance cameras, and friends and relatives wishing to visit detainees are searched before passing through five separate remote-controlled doors.

Campsfield House operates like a high-security prison despite the fact that those inside have committed no crime - unless seeking refuge from torture and repression is now considered a crime in New Labour's Britain.

The food is bland, monotonous and poor quality.

Medical facilities are poor. The library is inadequate and there is little to do.

The small shop is expensive

and poorly stocked.

Detainees arriving without spare clothes are not provided for.

The buildings are cramped and recreation areas were unpleasant.

For someone who has escaped from torture and imprisonment in their own country the effects of detention in the UK are devastating. Detention reflects the government's utter lack of respect and an absence of humanitarian concern for asylum-seekers, and other immigrants.

Detainees at Campsfield have a long history of protest against the unacceptable way in which they are treated by the British state and the inhuman conditions that are meted out to them.

In August 1997 for example there was a serious disturbance at the camp after which nine arrests were made.

The case against the protestors collapsed after it was shown in

court that Group 4 officers were contradicting each other.

It is also clear that the detainees have gained strength from the long running solidarity campaign run by local activists. The authorities have also recognised this and retaliated - for example by making the perimeter fence higher so that is more difficult for those inside to see the demonstrators outside.

But yet again the recent protest shows that the resolve of those inside remains remarkably strong despite their barbaric treatment.

It also reminds us why it is so important to attend the mobilisations called by the campaign.

■ Close Campsfield, all detention/centres, and detention/prisons;

■ Stop immigration detentions and imprisonment;

■ Stop racist deportations;

■ Repeal all immigration laws, laws which only serve to reinforce racism.

**National Protest**

**"Close Down Campsfield"**

**6th Anniversary Demonstration**

**Saturday 27 November 1999**

**12.00pm to 2.00pm**

**Main gate, Campsfield Detention Centre  
Langford Lane, Kidlington, Oxford**

Join the demonstration, bring your banners and plenty of noise to let the detainees inside know that we on the outside want them released immediately.

For further information ring:

Bill MacKeith on 01865-558145

Transport to the Demo:

From LONDON ring Zrinka Bralo, NCADC, 0171-701-5197

WEST MIDLANDS ring John O, NCADC, 0121-554-694

NORTH WEST Tony Openshaw NCADC 0161-740-8206

# Nurses sacrificed on altar of "partnership"

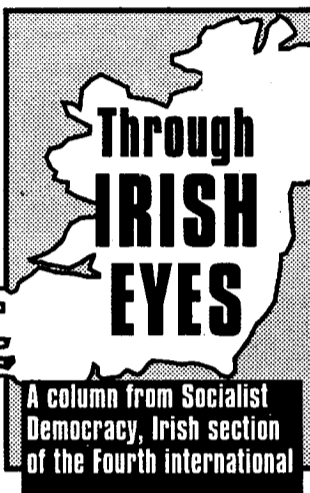


The Irish nurses' strike came to an end after just nine days on the picket line. The strike was called off by the union leadership before the nurses had actually voted on the government's 'new' proposal.

The union leadership insisted on the strike being called off or as they put it 'postponed' in order to ensure that the nurses vote for the deal, which they did by an overwhelming majority.

The strike itself and the leadership's sell out have to be seen against the background of Partnership 2000 which is now due for renewal. The nature of Social Partnership which is lost on most of the Irish left is that it is a mechanism for the delivering the defeat of the working class, and has been successful to date in delivering heavy blows to the workers' movement.

The lynchpin of it is trade union support for the neoliberal offensive. In this context the Irish government made it plain that the nurses - how-



down and defeated if they went on strike. Prior to the strike they refused to open negotiations with the nurses' unions and upped the ante on an almost daily basis. The union leadership signalled their willingness to capitulate even before the strike had begun.

This strike was about more than wages. It was also about the health service, which right through the 1980s had suffered massive cutbacks

which led to hospital and ward closures. This fact made the strike very popular with the general public.

The union leadership, which (as always) justified social Partnership on the grounds that it allows them influence on social expenditure and such issues, refused to make cutbacks and the general deterioration in the health service a central issue.

To do so would have placed them in direct and open opposition to both the government and Social Partnership itself.

In the week before the strike the SIPTU, the largest union in Ireland which also represents some nurses delivered a pre-emptive stab in the back by voting to enter into negotiations for a successor to Partnership 2000 (given that nearly half of their membership voted against Partnership 2000, the delegates overwhelming vote was on which Albanian Stalinist leader Enver Hoxha would have been proud of).

In effect SIPTU was saying that whatever happened to

**"The union leadership signalled their willingness to capitulate even before the strike had begun."**

the nurses they were going to go for a new deal and no dispute with the government was going to spoil the party.

The unions have through the RyanAir dispute and the sell off of Telecom made it plain to the government that they have no bottom line. They have no alternative, there is no way back for them. This was seen clearly when the ICTU decided at their congress the day before the nurses' ballot to enter negotiations for a new deal.

## The Left

The response of the left has been abysmal, as it has been for the last twelve years of Partnership. They have carried on with abstract sloganeering and a competition for recruitment without any real cognisance of the actual course of the class struggle and the blows which have been inflicted upon the working class.

For them it has been business as usual.

Before the strike the SWP called a conference against Social Partnership which they organised in a completely sectarian way, but which nonetheless attracted a large number of militants. The chances of any serious discussion was thwarted by the hysterical approach of the SWP to the then pending nurses' strike.

The strike was presented in cataclysmic terms, being seen as the final nail in the coffin of Social Partnership and any sober assessment of the near inevitable sell-out by the leadership was shot down as defeatist.

The possibility of any serious united work being undertaken was well and truly nullified when leading members of the SWP got up to correct the tone being adopted by some of the trade union militants present who attacked the union leadership.

Their candidate for the

leadership in SIPTU, Carolann Duggan, said at the end of her speech that "the Trade Union leadership is not the enemy".

This is no aberration. Not only did she say it at a conference against Social Partnership, but she had also said it at the end of her campaign for a leadership position in SIPTU. In their pamphlet on Social Partnership they have slogan which is criminally stupid in the context of twelve years' support for neoliberalism:

"We will support the official just so long as they right (sic) represent the workers, but we will act independently immediately they misrepresent them".

The Socialist Party, who along with the SWP have had the political field to themselves in Ireland in terms of opposition to Social Partnership have been similarly slow to recognise the role of the bureaucracy, and have the same tendency towards abstract timeless slogans. Like the SWP they denounced the ICTU for arbitrating rather than supporting the nurses.

Where have they been for twelve years? In response to the huge corruption scandals they called for nationalising the banks when every public company in the state is being prepared for privatisation by a government secure in the knowledge that the leadership of the trade union movement will support them and that these same officials face no organised opposition.

The task of building a united front opposition to the leadership has not yet begun. Both these organisations have so far proved incapable of facilitating just such a task.

## Aftermath

The nurses strike has been an important strike for many reasons not least the fact that the government chose it as a battleground for defending its programme. Despite the defeat there have been some important fallout.

The most obvious is that nurses went on strike in the first place, breaking their servile position at the bottom of the pecking order in the medical professions. The strike has upset the hierarchy within the health service. That can only be for the best.

Despite the huge campaign against them the nurses retained public support. In a poll taken during the strike 70% of the public blamed the government. Clearly people understood that treating the nurses badly also meant poor health care for patients.

# When peace and prosperity depend on deadly trade

One of the key arguments of advocates of the "peace process" is that it will deliver economic prosperity. This was the message that was being hammered home on the 24th August at a press conference to announce that an American electronics company was to establish a new software centre in Derry.

Those in attendance included Ulster Unionist leader, David Trimble and SDLP leader, John Hume. Such an event would be unremarkable if wasn't for the fact that the company involved was Raytheon, and the proposed software centre's main contract would be with the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

It is of course ironic that a weapons factory should be welcomed so warmly by Trimble and Hume, the two pillars of the peace process who had so recently been awarded the Nobel Peace prize. Indeed, John Hume's involvement in the Raytheon investment went well beyond a symbolic welcome. He was instrumental bringing the defence company to Derry. The extent of his role was acknowledged by Raytheon Chairman and Chief Executive Dan Burnham, when he claimed that his company was "indebted to John Hume for his encouragement" to locate in Derry. Not surprising such hypocrisy went largely unchallenged.

The Raytheon investment does not just pose moral questions; it is also economic and political. For it epitomises

the type of economic development that is associated with the peace process; the key features of which are low social standards (i.e. poor working conditions, low pay, no unions etc); and dependency on the British state.

Like many of companies that have recently invested in the north, Raytheon will not recognise trade unions.

It will also be dependent on direct and indirect financial support from Britain.

The Derry plant will be wholly dependent on a £1.3 billion contract with the Ministry of Defence for the Airborne Standoff Radar (ASTOR). Despite his praise for the persuasive powers of John Hume, Burnham admitted that: "In the absence of ASTOR, we would not have the reason or motivation or to get to know this area."

He also said he wished for "a peaceful and prosperous future". Yet the fact is that Raytheon, as a defence company, is dependent on conflict and instability. That was seen clearly only a few months earlier during the Kosovo conflict. As Raytheon-manufactured Tomahawk missiles pounded Yugoslavia, its shares soared from \$58 to \$72.

In addition to its weapons being on show, there was the expectation that it would win contracts to replenish the diminished stocks of the US military. The critical point is that Raytheon's success as a company

depends, not just on the manufacture of weapons, but on their use. Put bluntly: war is good for business!

There is also the myth that Raytheon has been a creator of jobs. In reality it has been a destroyer of jobs. The consequence of consolidation in the defence industry, a process pioneered by companies such as Raytheon, has been massive job losses. Following the Raytheon's take-over of Texas and Hughes in 1998, 10,000 workers were made redundant. This was not an isolated incident.

Over a period of years, Raytheon had been making deep cuts in its workforce. In 1995, the State of Massachusetts gave the company a \$21m tax cut after it threatened to pull out its operations; six months later Raytheon sacked 4,400 workers in the state. Such cuts have not been confined to the United States. In 1994, it closed two factories in Britain that had recently been acquired from British Aerospace: 8,700 jobs were lost.

The company's plans for future redundancies have already been announced. In 1997, at the same time as Raytheon announced annual sales of \$13.7 billion, it also announced that it planned to cut as much as 8 per cent of its workforce. Just this October that figure was revised upwards when, in response to a plunge in its share price, Raytheon announced that a further 2,380 jobs would be slashed. This will bring



Serbia in flames: profits for Raytheon

the total of redundancies to 18,000 over a period of two years. Such figures put the 150 jobs to be created at Raytheon's Derry site in perspective.

The Raytheon investment in Derry is inherently bound up with the brutalities of imperialist aggression, and the priorities of the British state.

It is no co-incidence that the major architects of the peace process, Blair and Clinton, have been leading the military charge around the world.

At the same time as they have been extolling the virtues of peace in Ireland, they have mercilessly bombed countries such as Iraq, Sudan and Yugoslavia.

This is not merely hypocrisy. Both are part of an imperialist strategy. Taken as a coherent whole, rather than a contradiction, they provide an insight into the imperialist basis of peace process. Raytheon is just one manifestation of this.



# Can unionist right block the final peace deal?

**T**he commentators analysing the last and final stage of the Irish peace process speak of a process on a knife edge. They neglect to explain that the only serious challenge is from the far right – from the most reactionary elements of unionism.

But this opposition obscures the reactionary nature of the forces who have crafted the deal under the cloak of secret diplomacy.

The SDLP, the Dublin government, US imperialism and the British ruling class – all these enemies of the Irish working class are presented as their protectors. Sinn Fein, the erstwhile opponents of imperialist rule, are co-opted as junior partners to defend the pacification project.

The right wing opposition also clouds the complete capitulation of Sinn Fein. The one line that they swore they would never cross – the surrender of weapons, is the central aspect of the final agreement.

The slogans on the walls in the nationalist ghettos state Sinn Fein's initial position. "Not a bomb – not a bullet". This, in the rightward drift of the process, became No first decommissioning. The agreement involves the handover of weapons almost immediately after the executive is formed and the total disarming of the IRA within a few months.

Marxists have always understood that the militarist policy of the Republicans was bankrupt. However the agreement to surrender weapons represents a massive setback for the working class. It was the measure that the Republicans themselves chose to demonstrate that they had not capitulated.

Their surrender is now all the more profound. It legitimises the imperialist monopoly on arms and indicates that the violence was the responsibility of the oppressed. At a practical level it disarms the nationalist working class despite the fact that the history of the North of Ireland is of resistance and reaction punctuated by pogrom.

Opponents of the agreement are accused of clinging to the past. In reality they are more conscious of the future. The Republican armed campaign ended in a welter of blood-letting by loyalism, supported by the British forces. Pogrom is implausible today simply because of the complete capitulation of Republicanism. The return of class struggle will also see the return of the threat of pogrom and full-scale sectarian terror.

However the issue of decommissioning fades into insignificance when compared with the direct political concessions made by the Republican leadership. They have conceded:

- partition,
- the return of Stormont,
- the unionist veto

## John North

- the removal of sections of the Irish constitution asserting a right to self-determination,

- sectarian structures at every level in the six county area

- and the continuation of British rule in Ireland.

British and US imperialism are assigned a progressive role and Republicans compete with the bourgeois parties to win influence.

**I**t's an indication of the political weakness of republicanism that in the face of such comprehensive betrayal no serious opposition has emerged.

Those who have broken away have mostly devoted their energies to rebuilding the militarist strategies that failed so comprehensively – and made the peace process so popular.

There is a small layer who have organised against the betrayal of their programme and individual militants who have denounced the sell-out, but they operate in a climate of implied threat and systematic smear by Sinn Fein supporters. In any case the demobilisation and demoralisation of the republican base makes the building of resistance a slow and arduous task.

Most of the Irish left had the illusion that republican difficulty would be socialist opportunity. But the retreat of republicanism has been linked to the decline of mass resistance. The result has been a marked shift to the right by socialist forces.

The Socialist Party in Ireland, who refused to recognise, let alone oppose, imperialism in Ireland, has relaunched a project to build a socialist party confined to



Stalingrad O'Neill

Sinn Fein see working within the agreement as the way forward

the occupied area of the six counties and to include in it the Progressive Unionist Party – spokespeople for the UVF death squads. now there is some doubt. By far the most likely outcome is, of course, British triumph.

So now for Marxists the

**"Of course, if the Good Friday agreement contains genuine reforms then socialists should support them and try to build working-class organisation to go beyond them. There is however no evidence to support such a view."**

The Socialist Workers Party are moving into the space vacated by the Socialist Party, with a new policy that socialism can be built in the occupied zone on purely economic issues.

Their policy on the peace process has moved from opposition to the bosses' peace to the invention by leading figure Eamon McCann of a "workers' peace process" which they do support.

The immediate issue is whether the right wing resistance will succeed in halting the closure of the deal. Trimble was able to take the leadership of unionism but was unavailable to do a deal because of the vicious reaction of his base.

The complex series of statements are meant to break up the elements of surrender – Sinn Fein surrenders and the IRA issue a statement of confidence in Sinn Fein – while statements from US chair Mitchell and General De Chastlain make it clear that the entire edifice of imperialism stands as guarantor of Republican surrender.

Meanwhile the British state makes it clear that this is the final offer of power and patronage and that the Unionist bourgeoisie must fall into line. It's a tribute to the volatility and reactionary nature of unionism that even

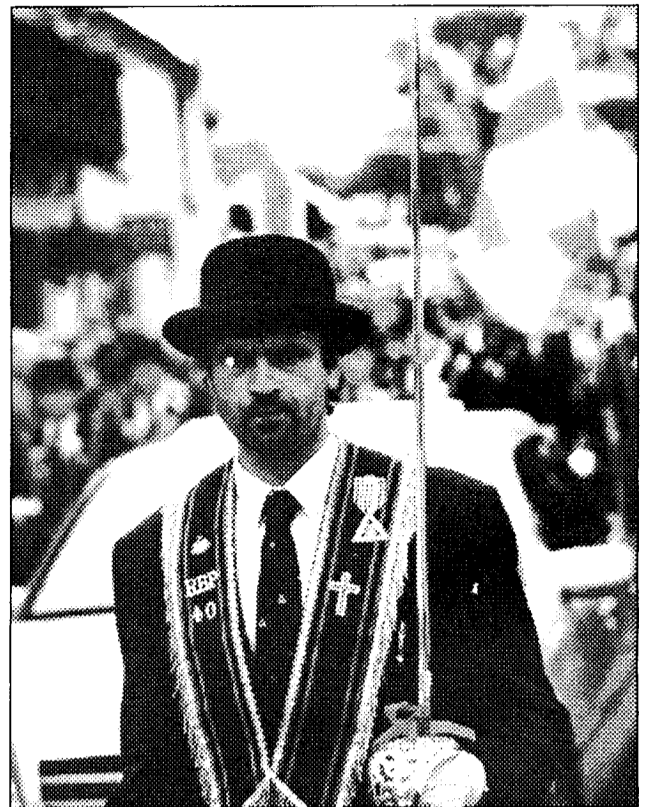
issues become not how to prevent the immediate triumph of imperialism and capitalism, but the tasks for the working class following such a triumph.

Sinn Fein, supported by the majority of the left, see the way forward as being within the agreement. For them, following a staged conception of history, the deal involves concessions to republicanism that open the way towards democratisation and desectarianising of the northern state leading eventually to a united Ireland.

Of course, if the Good Friday agreement contains genuine reforms then socialists should support them and try to build working-class organisation to go beyond them. There is however no evidence to support such a view.

**T**he agreement negates the understanding of the Irish struggle as a battle against imperialism and replaces it with the idea that the troubles were essentially a communal conflict where the imperialist forces acted as referee.

The agreement shares out privilege between the two communities. The cross-border elements, that were supposed to be stepping stones



Andrew Wiard

Trimble's supporters may yet demand even more concessions

to a united Ireland, are so derisory that they are no longer even the subject of debate.

As a result:

- There is no end to repression – the anti-democratic PTA laws are simplified, modernised and become permanent parts of the legal code.

- The RUC is modernised without the issue of its endemic sectarianism or its links to the death squads even being discussed.

- The right to assemble and march is tightly restricted for the population as a whole, while complex formulae are found to justify

Sinn Fein will not "double-cross" him. It takes very little imagination for even the most loyal republican supporter to work out who is being double-crossed. The local community paper, the *Andersonstown News*, which has led the way in the rush to the right, has an amusing suggestion for its readers in a recent editorial.

It urges its readers not to think about the consequences for republicans but to concentrate on supporting the arch bigot Trimble and the Good Friday agreement!

**N**ot thinking is an essential condition for getting the process to work and keep it working. In the medium term the economics of the peace process have been as suspect as its politics.

The economics today are described as a "Gibraltar solution" – British, US and European money is used to buy off any potential opponents and employ them in a massively swollen voluntary and community sector. For years a peace dividend of multi-national investment has been promised but has not emerged.

In the meantime in the formally independent southern state where a strategy of attracting multi-national investment by savage controls on workers' pay and conditions has led to the "Celtic Tiger" economy, workers are today being asked to face the fact that they will not share in the new prosperity – that in fact the prosperity depends on continued suppression of working-class living standards and conditions and a savage programme of de-regulation and privatisation.

The resurgence of class struggle in the south will not happen easily. The union bureaucracy will fight tooth and nail to continue in their role of police for the bourgeoisie.

But when it does happen, "not thinking" will not be an option for Northern workers.

The issue for Marxists as always is the consciousness of the working class – and that can only develop if militants now are prepared to stand as irreconcilable opponents of the imperialist settlement.

sectarian bigots being forced through nationalist areas.

- A civil society is constructed which codifies sectarian privilege at every level – the main change being that some sectarian privilege is reserved for nationalists.

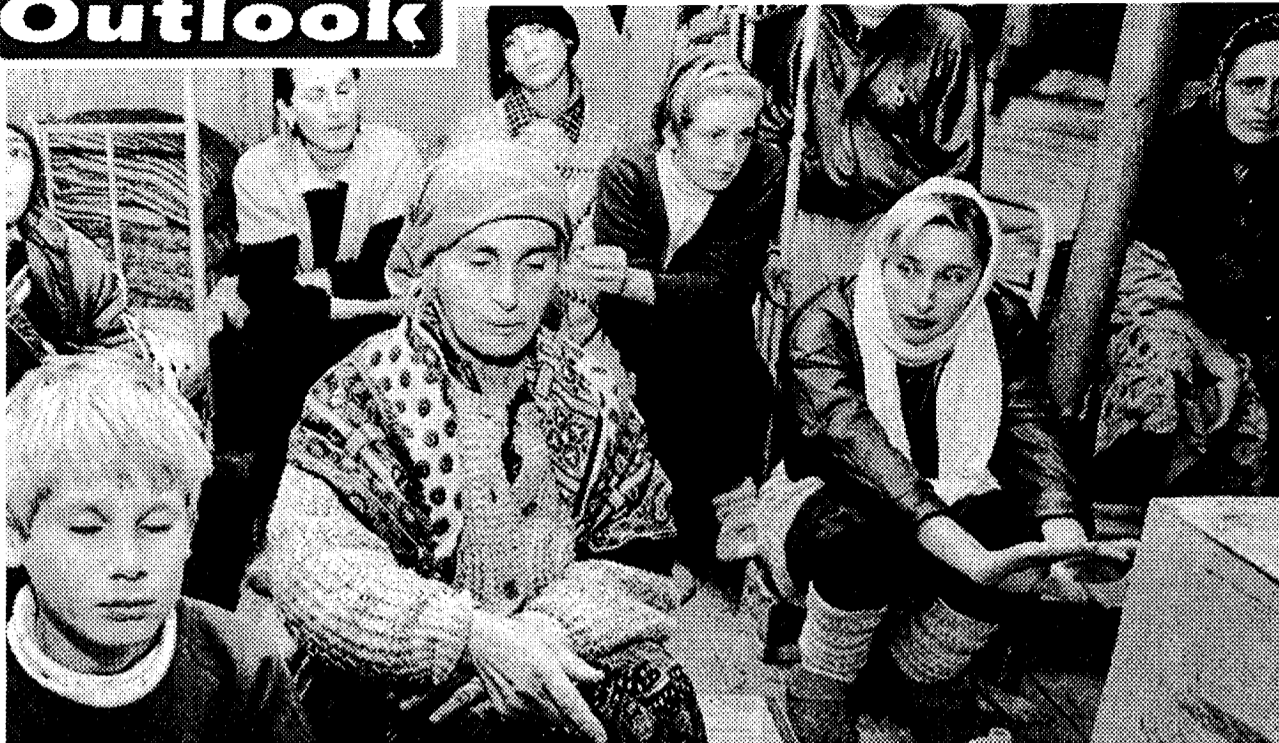
- Britain remains in Ireland and in complete control of the North of Ireland, with direct control of the budget and the state forces. It is now able to hide behind a Stormont assembly.

**F**or socialists it should be impossible to imagine the self-organisation of the working class in its own interests without also opposing the Good Friday agreement and the state it is establishing.

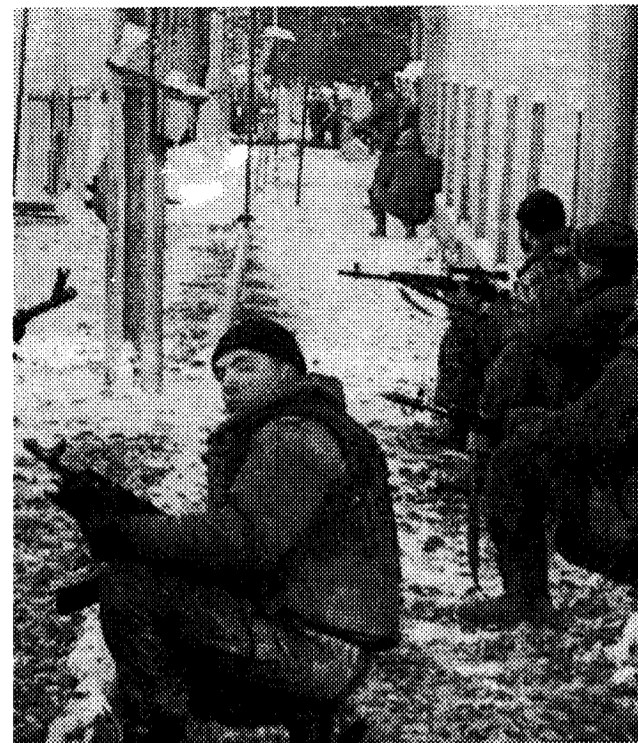
There are grounds for optimism. The agreement is being rushed through with two different sets of lies being told to the different communities.

British secretary of state Mandelson openly admits its weakness, and admits that further storms lie ahead. Essentially imperialism is trying to consolidate its gains while beginning to openly admit that it has not produced a solution.

Even Sinn Fein's Pat Doherty's attempts to reassure US supporters are enough to cause a storm. He assures David Trimble that



*Paying the price for Moscow's crisis: Chechen refugees*



*Russian troops are moving in after destroying Chechen towns*

# More sword than samovar, as Yeltsin lays waste to Chechnya

**Sheila Malone**

**S**ixty people die when bombs hit a crowded marketplace, forty as a passenger bus is hit, another twenty five as they flee in a refugee convoy. Roads are jammed as 200,000 are driven from their homes and forced to survive in desperate conditions in border camps.

Such scenes remind us of NATO's indiscriminate bombings and their aftermath in its war in the Balkans. The invader this time is Russia, whose air and land forces have been battering the small Chechen republic of Ichkeria (Chechnya in Russian) for the past three months.

With the same savagery as NATO in the Balkans, Russia is now waging its war in the Caucasus, aimed at inflicting the maximum damage to the area's infrastructure and therefore to civilian life whilst minimising Russian casualties. Thousands of men, women and children have been killed or injured and hospitals, schools, roads, bridges and water and power supplies destroyed.

A Russian resident of Chechnya (actually a Cossack) interviewed during Russia's last war there in 1994-5, in which an estimated 50,000 people died, complained: "God knows why the army

came here. To protect Boris Yeltsin, to keep the (oil) pipeline from the Caspian, to line someone's pocket - only not for us, that's clear."

The mountainous region of the North Caucasus has always been of vital geopolitical and strategic importance to Tsarist and Soviet - and now post-Soviet - Russia. In seeking to subdue it, Russia has used the "sword and the samovar" tactic to divide and rule and play off one people against another.

**T**he brutality and cynicism with which this was carried out has led to centuries of oppression and resistance.

Perhaps the most savage episode was the mass deportations of the Chechens and other nationalities - the Ingush, the Karchai, the Balkars, the Kalmyks, the Meskhetians and the Tartars - after the Second World War. Fearing opposition and the exposure of his own criminal role during the war, Stalin simply wiped these entire peoples off the map.

Though tens of thousands died of cold, starvation and disease during the exodus it is a tribute to the Chechens that when Khrushchev allowed them to return in 1957, they were able to rebuild their nation. Never the less, a bitter legacy remains from this and other oppressions. Chechnya was incorporated

into the Soviet Union in the 1920's and in 1936 given the status of an autonomous Republic within the Russian Federation. i.e. not full regional status as were, for example, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The "thaw" under Khrushchev and the later growing economic difficulties of the Soviet Union led, by the 1970s and 80s, first to demands for greater autonomy and later to the formation of movements such as the Popular Front of Chechnya and Ingushetia.

By 1991, influence by events in the Baltic States and in response to Yeltsin's mishandling of the situation more radical Chechen dissidents - among them the later President Wzhokhar Dudayev - had seized power and declare independence.

No serious attempt was made by Moscow to put down the revolt in Chechnya for another three years. But when invasion did come, it led to a humiliating defeat for Russia.

**M**uch of the reason for this was the continuing collapse of the Russian state itself and the decay and demoralisation within the military. But Moscow also decided to concede a (temporary at least) Chechen victory because the revolt did not lead to further

destabilisation in the North Caucasus, despite the rebels pleas for support from neighbouring Republics.

A peace treaty was therefore agreed to which stated that Chechnya should have a special status that would not contradict two conditions - the integrity of the Russian Federation and the principle of self-determination. However, as most Chechens wanted by now to use self-determination to leave the Federation, these two principles contradicted each other in practice.

**T**he immediate publicised causes of the present Russian invasion in August this year were firstly a series of bombings in apartment blocs in Moscow in which 300 people died and secondly the incursion of some Chechen fighters, led by Shamil Basayev, into neighbouring Dagestan.

The Kremlin immediately blamed "Chechen terrorists" and Islamic fundamentalists." The Chechens have denied any involvement in the bombings and the Dagestan episode seems mainly to have been a handful of previous independence fighters backed by some arms and rhetoric from the Middle East. However, the fear and racism that Moscow whipped around both gave the excuse to intervene.

Thus the contradictions of the 95 peace agreement have been blown apart, with the Kremlin reclaiming Chechnya as an "internal matter" for the Russian Federation. In doing so, Russia has reasserted its traditional foreign policy vis-à-vis the Caucasus. What was blurred last spring by Moscow's marginalisation during NATO's war for influence in the Balkans has now become clear in Russia's claimed right to intervene in its own sphere of influence in the Caucasus - with the West's tacit endorsement.

Besides being a natural southern border to Russia, the geopolitical importance of the Caucasus lies in its rich natural resources of oil and gas. The Chechen capital of Grozny was once the second biggest oil centre of the Soviet Union - the second largest country in the world. Chechnya's own oil reserves are now almost exhausted but its importance still in the Baku-Novorosiisk pipeline (from Azerbaijan to Russia) which flows straight through it.

With the recent discovery of vast new oil reserves under Azerbaijan, both East and West have their eyes on this very valuable prize but its exploitation and export is of very vital interest to Russia. It sees its role as preserving stability in the region by opposing Chechen independence and preventing the spread of the "Chechen disease" to neighbouring Republics.

Western leaders, equally interested in this stability are giving Boris Yeltsin the green light for this policing role by their refusal to give anything but a friendly reprimand over the present war.

Though some European leaders, seeing a role for the OSCE which met in Turkey in November have ventured a stronger criticism, the fervent moral crusading over oppression in Kosova used to justify the West's own war against Serbia has been conspicuously absent over Russian oppression in Chechnya.

The geopolitics of oil play a big part on both sides in the interdependency of Russia and the Caucasus Republics.

Throughout Chechnya's bid for either greater autonomy or independence, Russia has used economic sanctions or withdrawal of state subsidies as well as military intervention to try to bring it to

heel.

However the political elites in both Moscow and Grozny have manipulated the situation in their own interests. In this the dealings of the Russian Mafia dwarf those of the Chechen, but it is nevertheless true that the corruption and gangsterism has played its part in growing problems and popular disillusionment with the Grozny regime. As an example of Mafia collaboration during the presidency of Dadyev despite a supposed blockade, Chechnya was able to continue importing Russian oil for refining and export and at the same time a blind eye was turned to the Chechens systematic siphoning off of oil from the pipeline. In fact an estimated \$1 billion went to the Chechen government from oil in the first three years of the blockade but, as in Russia, it is unclear into whose pockets the money actually went.

**W**hat is clear is that Chechnya embarked on the same neo-

liberal economic project as Russia itself. Public Services decayed, jobs were lost and wages unpaid. Again as in Russia, unless people have been prepared to engage in the parallel black economy their living standards have plummeted.

This summer prolonged talks between Russia and Chechnya on the future of the Baku-Novorosiisk pipeline broke down. Although one of the less publicised, this is certainly a factor in Russia's decision to invade.

Much is at stake both for the Kremlin politicians and the previously humiliated armed forces, who this time are claiming they can win the war.

But whatever the aims and machinations of the political and military elites, this is a war to subdue a small resilient nation and bring it once more under Russian domination.

The brutal bombardment should be stopped immediately, Russian troops withdrawn and the Chechen people given the right to determine their own future.

Economic sanctions must be lifted, neighbouring borders opened to refugees and massive aid given to alleviate their terrible plight as winter approaches.

Behind Russian war on Chechnya

# Politics by other means

Dave Packer

**T**he brutal wars of national oppression in Dagestan and Chechnya involve important strategic geo-political and economic objectives for the Russian state bureaucracy.

These include the securing of important regional oil and gas reserves, securing the Baku-Novorosisk pipeline and implicitly combating US imperialism's aggressive new world order which is perceived as increasingly making ground at Russia's expense, including in its previously sacrosanct "spheres of influence."

NATO has little capacity to influence developments in the Caucasus, hence its quietist response. However, the US hawks would like to put pressure in Russia's Southern flank.

The strategic goals of US Imperialism and NATO are not driven by universalist norms such as such as "human rights", "peace and stability", or "economic development" aimed at improving living conditions, but by their own state political and economic interests.

The Balkan war tore up all the Helsinki security agreements made with Russia and ignored the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in favour of a naked show of strength, aimed partly at intimidating Russia and China and their allies.

NATO enlargement, against earlier and commitments, rapidly moved from diplomacy to unilateral military initiative in line with the policy of the US hawks, such as Madeleine Albright and Zbigniew Brzezinski. This has only fuelled Russian fears of encirclement.

Nor will not have passed unnoticed by Russian leaders that influential US hawk Brzezinski is a consultant to Amoco and the Azerbaijan International Operating Company, and has close links with other oil cartels in the region. Nonetheless for now imperialism is playing a restrained game.

When Clausewitz wrote that "War is politics by other means" he was thinking precisely of this kind of real-politic. But these are not the only considerations. If the drive to war is fundamentally pushed forward by strategic geo-political objectives, in this case of the Russian state in relation to Chechnya, secondary even relatively trivial issues can act as the spark that ignites conflict.

For example, the exact timing of the renewed bombing of Baghdad appeared to be closely linked to the political difficulties faced by President Clinton over the Lewinski affair.

Similarly, Clausewitz was clearly not thinking of the kind of machinations which now go for politics in the Kremlin when he formulated his famous dictum, where if matters were not so serious they could readily degenerate into farce. But we cannot avoid the fact that this war, at this time, despite the important strategic questions, is also very politically convenient.

A political crisis, and increasingly a political vacuum, is opening up in Moscow. This does not make for stable government or measured judgements, particularly when the President and his clique are engaged in covering up their corruption and the military is driven by revenge and damaged pride after the debacle of the first Chechnya war in 1996.

**F**or the moment, however, better military and political preparation, aided by some very convenient terrorist bombs which indiscriminately destroyed residential apartment blocks in working class districts, has initially transformed the second Chechnya war (unlike the first) into a popular crusade.

The *Economist* magazine has asked what many have been thinking - Are the Russian military also preparing for some "political initiative"? Maybe some powerful forces have decided enough is enough.

The war is politically convenient in the heartland because it's election time and Yeltsin is having trouble grooming a credible candidate to replace him in the Presidential elections next year. His own personal standing in the opinion polls is 3%.

Given this, the economic crisis, the volatility of the political situation and the crisis in the armed forces, the war is a huge gamble, but if victorious, could not only rebuild the prestige and confidence of the armed forces but mobilise nationalist sentiment and national unity behind the discredited Yeltsin/Putin government.

Socialists reject such political methods not just because they will fail, even if Russian forces are victorious in the war, but because they are crimes against the people and will only drive many of the most oppressed peoples of the Caucasus into the arms of imperialism.

But not only the peoples of the Caucasus - for together with the cynical gangsterism of the bureaucracy and the new "mafia capitalism" which it has spawned the war will only further demoralise the Russian masses. None of the key players remotely represent

the interests of the working class.

As *Socialist Outlook* suggested in September, it is particularly important for Yeltsin to ensure that his chosen successor, former KGB agent Vladimir Putin, is elected. This is because Yeltsin and his clique have plenty to fear, especially major charges of corruption, if he doesn't win.

Putin's task therefore has been to escalate the attacks on Luzhkov, the Mayor of Moscow, and his rapidly growing party, Fatherland. He is one of the main challengers along with the Communist Party, while the neo liberal 'centre-left' party, Yablocko is considered less threatening.

However, according to the *Economist*, Yeltsin's camp has realised that things have already gone too far and are thinking about more radical solutions:

"The really worrying prospect is that Mr Yeltsin's camp is toying with other ideas, ranging from the outlandish to the wholly unconstitutional; declaring a union with Belaruss, for example, or banning the Communist Party, or announcing a state of emergency." (14-20.8.99)

While these options appeared unlikely outside of a new crisis or a war, these have now materialised.



Vladimir Putin

**E**verybody in Russia knows that organised crime is linked to the state bureaucracy and nomenclatura. They know that Mafia gangs such as Solntsevo, Russia's biggest organised crime gang, run by Sergei Mikhailov, has been draining the economy of money and potential investments.

They have laundered huge sums from the IMF and other sources, and from their own racketeering, even 'legitimate' enterprise, through various accounts in British, American and Swiss banks, especially the Bank of New York. But even after



Boris is willing to sacrifice Chechen people to save his skin

Russia's default on loan repayments, followed by the collapse of the rouble and the further meltdown of the economy in the Summer of 1998, the loans have kept coming - and have kept disappearing down a black hole.

The finger is now pointing towards the highest offices in the state.

Under headlines like "Russian Mafia target the City" and "Fury in Britain as US leak blows investigation into money-laundering link with world's most wanted man", the scale of the Russian Mafia operations in City institutions has once again been exposed.

The *Guardian* reported that, "An undercover investigation, said to involve agents from MI6 and the FBI, was continuing until news of the case broke in the *New York Times* last week." (23.8.99)

The National Crime Squad was furious at the leak which exposed its investigations into the laundering of dirty money, especially as it had prompted a hasty and premature raid on the central London apartment of a Russian-born London employee of the Bank of New York and her Russian husband.

A sum estimated at between \$4.2 billion and \$10 billion had been put through a single account in the Bank of New York! Even worse, it was suspected that the leak came from a high-level US source.

Up until then, the British authorities, had been co-operating with the FBI and the US Attorney's office in their investigations into the Bank of New York. Most of the \$25 billion sent to Russia from the IMF since 1992 has gone the same way.

About the same time the multiple murder, in a villa on the edge of Frankfurt's business district, of four East

European prostitutes, the brothel owner and his wife, was being reported.

**T**his contract killing was said to have been arranged by Semion Mogilevich, 'the most dangerous mobster in the world'.

The purpose of the murders was to deter rival operators from moving in on his patch. The Russian police believe Mogilevich is also a senior figure in the Solntsevo gang, which runs prostitution on a massive scale throughout Eastern and Western Europe, and is also said to be involved in the traffic of nuclear materials, drugs, precious gems and stolen art, money laundering, as well as contract killings.

This is the very same organisation which is being investigated by the officers from the National Crime Squad at the London office of the Bank of New York. Mogilevich, who is suspected of being involved, first came to the attention of Britain's Intelligence Service in 1995, when he was involved with the money-laundering activities of Arbat International and an associated Channel Islands company, Arigon.

In this case, the investigation had led to the arrest of three people, including two City solicitors. Other London firms are under investigation.

**A**ccording to *The Guardian*, intelligence sources in Moscow believe that the British and US investigations have uncovered a major conduit of dirty money out of Russia that involved the connivance of Russian organised crime overseas and senior figures in the establishment.

Author Jeffrey Robinson - whose book, *The Merger*, was published in August stated that; "Mogilevich typifies the new global criminal."

he continues, "These men don't rob banks, they buy them. They take full advantage of globalisation, ill-equipped law enforcement and lax money-laundering laws - especially in Britain - using the City of London as their onshore gateway to the offshore world. This case is the tip of the iceberg."

"The City is an absolute cesspool and it will remain a cesspool because the people in charge don't care. Mogilevich is not the only one, the Bank of New York is not the only place. London is the best place to launder money in the world. Since the money-laundering regulations were introduced in this country four years ago, there have been thousands of reports but only one successful prosecution."

The conspiracy goes even deeper, right into the heart of the Kremlin. Natasha Kagalovsky a senior Bank of New York executive in the USA was suspended on suspicion of laundering money there. Her husband happens to be Konstantin Grigoryevich Kagalovsky, who headed Russia's debt negotiations with the West! Kagalovsky is no ordinary crook.

His mentor is Anatoly Chubais, who became Boris Yeltsin's chief of staff in the Kremlin, and is now head of the pro-Yeltsin political bloc, which, along with Chernomyrdin's party, is expected to back the new Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin's run for the presidency next year.

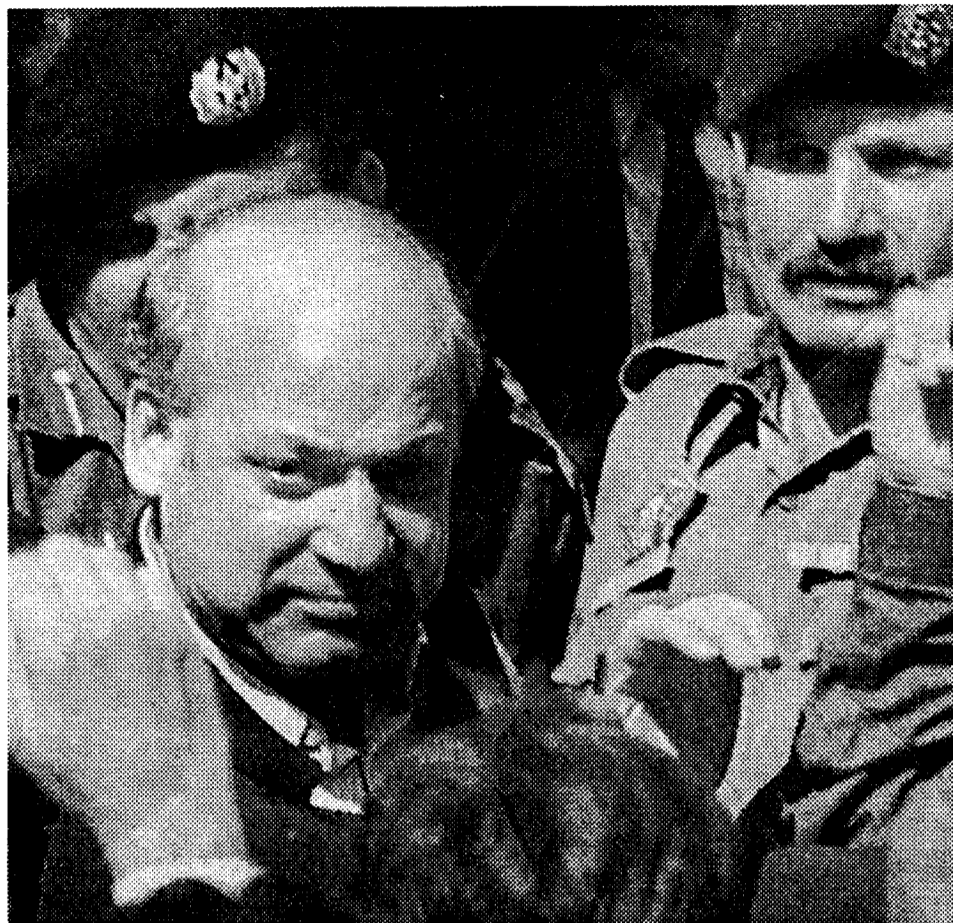
This is why the Yeltsin clique is so concerned to get their chosen successor back into the Kremlin as the new President.

It's worth going to war for!

■ (See 'Kosovo: The War of NATO Expansion,' Robin Blackburn, *New Left Review* 235 and, 'The NATO Powers and the Balkan Tragedy,' Peter Gowan, *NLR* 234 for more detailed discussion.)

# Why Sharif took on the army

*Under heavy guard: Sharif on a rare appearance after the coup*



**Farooq Suleheria of the Labour Party Pakistan, explains some of the issues behind the recent coup in Pakistan.**

**T**he economic crisis in Pakistan is part of the world economic crisis. Pakistan depends a lot on foreign assistance, especially aid from the IMF and World Bank. During the Cold War it was getting a lot of aid especially during the 80s.

But now the Cold War has ended, aid has been seriously reduced. Worse now the IMF and World Bank want debt repayments. It is this issue of debt repayments that are the major pressure on the Pakistani government.

The other issue is that the army is the most powerful institution in Pakistan, the most organised and as a social force it is the most important power to be reckoned with.

It is the biggest industrial group, it has a strength of half a million - if you include the different militias it is 1 million. It has generals who have become feudal landlords, who get huge feudal estates on their retirement. So it's a hugely important social force. But since the early 90's US

imperialism does not need the Pakistan army in the way it did during the Cold War and according to their new priorities they want to see a reduced defence budget for Pakistan.

Of course they still need the Pakistan army - they do not want to abolish it all together. They needed it in Bosnia and in Somalia where there were Pakistani soldiers who were killed and there may be other cases where they need it in the future.

Pakistan has a strategic importance for the US because of its borders with India, China, Iraq and Afghanistan.

**S**o Nawaz Sharif was asked to reduce the budget deficit to end subsidies, to carry out major privatisations, to lay off many staff in the public sector - and another important thing in the political agenda, which was linked with the economic agenda, was normalisation of relations with India.

The mass of the people had big illusions in Nawaz Sharif, especially in the Punjab

because this is where he is from..

During his first period in office from 1990-3 he had carried out some major projects like building a motorway other schemes that were big opportunities for jobless youth and people thought that there would be more of the same this time, especially given the size of his majority.

But this time the situation was very different because he was not getting IMF/World Bank funds like before and was instead under pressure to repay the loans. So he was increasingly cutting subsidies and this led to a big crisis for the agro-economy.

The Pakistan economy mainly depends on cotton and sugar cane - which are cash crops. It is a common saying in Pakistan that if you will have good cotton, you will have good budget.

So the cut in subsidies for these crops led to an increase in prices and this created a whole cycle of crisis with growers refusing to plant and a decline in exports etc etc

The other pressure was the reduction in tariffs which

made the trade gap very big. It could have been bigger still but there was a fall in export of these big machines because lots of small firms - especially those linked to the ago-industry - closed down because of the cuts in subsidy and the reduction in tariffs.

So there is a whole cycle of economic crisis which led to a political crisis. Then at the same time, there was the down-sizing of the army is also going on for the last few years.

Recruitment was frozen, and the size of army has shrunk. But the army manoeuvred to have people moved to work in different government departments so they do not lose their job all together. So for example thousands of troops were sent to work in the Power department supposedly to chase up unpaid bills.

At present many major departments are being run by either retired Generals or serving Generals.

So for example there are serving Generals running the electric department in Karachi, and also the Vice Chancellor of the biggest University in Pakistan, Punjab University has a retired General as Vice Chancellor.

And there was a strike by the teachers in protest over this because he knew nothing about Education but still got this job.

national pressure there was a compromise and Nawaz backed down in terms of the IMF agenda on defence and the President and Chief Justice who had been supporting the army were removed.

So then Nawaz was in a cleft stick between the army and the IMF so this meant that in order to carry out the austerity ordered by the IMF, he had to put the whole burden on the masses.

**P**etrol prices doubled during the two and a half years he was in office, utility bills went up massively, over 200,000 people lost their jobs in the public sector.

Whole sectors of what had previously been in the public sector were completely shut down and abandoned, particularly in transport. There were also significant redundancies in Banking, power and Telecommunications.

So there was a massive disillusionment and hatred against Nawaz Sharif. He was able to recoup some of this for a brief time in May 1998 when he made the nuclear explosion - but this rise in popularity was very short lived because the economic situation was completely unrelenting. Then towards the end of last year the Lahore process started which was aimed at normalising relations with India and this was to be another important factor in the removal of Nawaz Sharif because it led to the Kargil crisis because the army is completely opposed to normalisation of relations with India. They are also opposed to any supposed "solution" on the question of Kashmir and that is why they took action to provoke the war over Kashmir that we saw this summer.

But all of this was strongly influenced by the economic situation - the army needed to prove its usefulness by showing that Kashmir was still in dispute, by showing their could be no normalisation with India because they don't want to lose their jobs - which are under threat because of the IMF and the World Bank.

## Help Sri Lanka left build a real campaign

### An Appeal from NSSP, Sri Lanka

THE PRESIDENTIAL election in Sri Lanka will be held on December 21 1999. After severe defeats on the war-front in the North, President Chandrika Kumaratunge is making an all-out effort to boost her election campaign.

The dissident group in the opposition United National Party(UNP) has already joined the People's Alliance(PA) government and Chandrika has offered them two ministerial posts.

The election offers immense opportunities to the NSSP and the left. The NSSP, JVP, Muslim United Liberation Front(MULF), New Left Front(NLF) have already agreed to nominate a common left candidate.

Comrade Nandana Gunatilake of the JVP has been unanimously accepted as the left candidate. The Democratic

Workers' Congress(DWC) has agreed to join our campaign which will boost up our campaign among the Kandian Tamils. The four signatory parties have agreed on a common programme;

1. To defeat Chandrika and Ranil, the local political agents of the World Bank, the IMF, and the capitalists of the imperialist countries.

2. Firmly to consolidate democratic rights in Sri Lankan society. As a powerful step towards that, to abolish the executive Presidency and immediately transfer such powers to the Parliament.

3. To appeal for a mandate to establish a left regime which will release the Sri Lankan Society from the trap of destructive war, to which it has been dragged; eradicate causes that led to the emergence and the growth of the national question; construct a permanent, honorable peace, and eradicate discrimination while establishing autonomous regions

for the minority nationalities within a socialist rule where democracy is fully established.

We decided to put forward a common left candidate primarily on the above basis. Considered in that sense, this is an understanding among four main left parties to correctly represent several fundamental objectives.

We believe on this principled basis, you also can contribute to the objective of victory of the left.

### Election Appeal.

In the provincial council elections, the JVP obtained around 500,000 votes and the NSSP standing only in 5 districts gained closer to 100,000 votes. So we are starting the Presidential elections with around 600,000 votes.

We need to raise £3500 to run this campaign. Please send cheques payable to YKK Kanhelage, c/o Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.



*FARC guerrillas now control a large section of the south*

# Colombia: US steps up intervention as peace hopes fade

**Adam Hartman**

IN JULY 1998 the newly-elected Conservative President of Colombia Andres Pastrana announced a new peace initiative.

There were high hopes of an end to the country's 35-year old civil war between the state and left-wing guerrillas which has displaced over one million people and left over 20,000 dead since 1985, 85 per cent at the hands of the armed forces and paramilitaries.

Pastrana had met with the leader of the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), the largest guerrilla organisation. They agreed to begin negotiations in January 1999. The government agreed to demilitarise five municipalities in the south, giving FARC control over an area the size of Switzerland.

In February the other main guerrilla organisation the UC-ELN (Camilista Union - National Liberation Army) began its own peace process, entering into discussions with representatives of the country's popular movement on the key issues facing the Colombian people.

Today the peace process is on the rocks. The paramilitary violence has continued unabated and the guerrillas have extended their operations. Talks broke down in July with the government accusing the guerrillas of abusing their powers in the demilitarised zone and the guerrillas accusing the government of not being interested in tackling the root causes of the war: the extremely unequal distribution of wealth between the country's elite and the majority of the population, and the exclusion of the poor from the political system and

from the benefits of economic growth, especially in the countryside.

Above all the guerrillas are demanding the abandonment of the neo-liberal economic model - the full opening of the country's economy in the early 1990s to foreign trade and investment. The talks were resumed in October.

With the hope of peace fading, a new cloud hangs over the Colombian people: the threat of joint military intervention in Colombia by other South American countries under the leadership of the United States.

The US government formally supports the peace process. A government official even met with a representative of the FARC in January. However there have been increasing calls within the Clinton administration for an external military solution to the war involving a regional intervention force. In July Clinton said that Colombia was a US national security interest and that Colombia faced "an internal threat".

## **US Intervention**

Over the past eighteen months the US has increased its military intervention in Colombia under the guise of strengthening the so-called war on drugs. It has also encouraged the militarisation of the regions bordering Colombia in neighbouring countries.

Colombia is now the third largest recipient of US military aid, with US\$289 million approved by Congress in October 1998, a threefold increase over the previous year. In July US Drug Czar Barry McCaffrey asked for an extra US\$1 billion in emergency counternarcotics assistance to the Andean region with half of it for

Colombia. There are 240 US personnel in Colombia providing high-tech intelligence support to the Colombian armed forces and training a new counternarcotics battalion of 1000 elite soldiers.

The US has expressed concern over the ability of Ecuador and Panama to defend their borders, citing cross-border operations by the guerrillas and drug-traffickers. Under pressure from the US the governments of Peru and Ecuador have moved troops up to their borders with Colombia.

Brazil has strengthened its military base on the Amazon River and installed radar along the entire length of its border with Colombia. Panama has moved 1,500 police to its border to guarantee protection of the Panama Canal zone. And for several years the Venezuelan Army has conducted military exercises close to its border with Colombia.

According to press reports the US has increased its own presence along Colombia's southern border. In early August Inter-Press Service reported that the US had stationed a contingent of special forces under the US Army Southern Command on the Peruvian and Ecuadorian borders with Colombia.

## **CIA plan**

On 29 July a report in the Argentine daily Clarin alleged a secret CIA plan to intervene in Colombia from positions in Peru and Ecuador.

The US government is clearly concerned about the Colombian drug trade which accounts for most of the cocaine and heroin entering the US. However it is hard to believe that the US is sincere about its war on drugs. The attempt to stop Colombia's drug trade by destroying the

coca plantations has failed.

The area under coca cultivation has doubled in the past five years with planters clearing forests to make way for new coca fields. For most growers coca is now the only way of making a living. The scrapping of the International Coffee Agreement in 1989 (which had kept prices stable) at the insistence of the US drove thousands of small-scale coffee-growers out of business, forcing them to rely on other sources of income.

The "drug war" waged by the US and Colombian governments is targeted against the guerrillas and the farmers who grow coca under their protection.

## **Drug barons**

Yet the barons who control the drug trade are left alone. Their paramilitary armies work closely with the army in waging a dirty war against trade union, peasant and civic organisations. Yet despite their role in the drug trade they operate with total impunity.

Although the drug barons have amassed colossal wealth, most of the money from the sale of Colombian drugs in the US is accumulated in the hands of dealers at various points of the supply chain in the US. This money is deposited in the US banking system.

Despite all the hysteria about "narco-guerrillas" drug imports into the US from Colombia have actually fallen over the last four years. Behind the "war on drugs" lies the desire to end Latin America's longest-running guerrilla insurgency.

The FARC and UC-ELN are growing in strength. They control about 40% and are active over 60-70% of Colombia's territory.

The guerrillas provide

essential services, protect the population against the army and paramilitaries, regulate disputes and administer justice in the sparsely-populated areas under their control, in which the state has historically been weak or absent altogether.

The guerrillas are not likely to overthrow the Colombian government in the medium term. However the existence of elements of an alternative guerrilla state over a large part of Colombia is viewed as a threat to US security both in its wider "backyard" (Central and South America) - the guerrillas could be an inspiration to other popular movements in Latin America - and in Colombia itself which occupies a highly strategic location.

Colombia is bounded by the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans and occupies the point of entry to South America. It has abundant natural resources, a large industrial sector and a growing market to which US companies enjoy unrestricted access. It is also very close to the Panama Canal which the US will hand back to Panama at the end of this year.

The US is seeking to establish new military bases in the region to replace the Howard Air Base in Panama, which the US recently left in accordance with the 1978 US-Panama treaty.

## **Naval base**

The US is negotiating for a naval base in the Ecuadorian city of Manta. According to a report in Clarin it is also seeking to extend US "extraterritoriality" in Argentina from the US embassy to include an airport in the north which would serve as a base for US operations in Colombia.

The US is trying to win the support of South American countries for a regional intervention force in Colombia. At a meeting of the Organisation of American States in June it proposed a "defence of democracy" resolution calling for the creation of a "Group of Friends" as a multinational force to intervene in Latin America to safeguard democracy.

This resolution was seen as a threat to national sovereignty and a cover for US intervention and was defeated.

However Argentina indicated that it would participate in such a force if asked to by the Colombian government.

A regional intervention force might defeat the guerrillas. But it would not bring peace, justice or genuine democracy to Colombia. Far from tackling the underlying causes of the war it would reinforce those causes.

It would strengthen both the Colombian elite, including the drug barons, and the army and paramilitaries which protect it against pressure from below for change. This pressure for change is the only route towards an alternative to the violence and poverty which blight so many lives in Colombia.

■ For more information on the peace process and the guerrillas see *International Viewpoint* No.309 (March 1999).

■ For information on the internet visit the Colombia Support Network website at [www.igc.apc.org/csn](http://www.igc.apc.org/csn).

■ For background information read *Colombia: inside the labyrinth* by Jenny Pearce, published in 1990 by Latin America Bureau. In December LAB is bringing out a new book on Colombia.

# 2000 years of what?

**John Lister**

It may seem outrageous enough that after countless ancient civilisations have left astonishing massive and mysterious stone monuments as a lasting memory of their existence, the best British capitalism can do to record the start of the third millennium is to lavish £750 million on a plastic tent on a piece of inaccessible waste land in Greenwich.

But insult follows injury, because among the more pointless of the displays which various commercial and other sponsors have prevailed upon to produce to fill up this costly void is the so-called "Spirit Zone".

Beleagued visitors seeking consolation for a wasted journey by indulging in a double Stolly on the rocks will be disappointed. This zone offers as little solace to them as it does to anyone believing it to be a space for re-running the old late night black and white TV spooky films *The Twilight Zone*.

No, in a world whose scientists have now not only split the atom but visited the moon and sent exploratory satellites circling the solar system, this zone is a monument to the Bible-bashing, sanctimonious god-botherers who are so firmly rooted in the Blair cabinet, and to religious prejudice of the most mediaeval type.

Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition to be there of course – but then, as the Monty Python crew pointed out, nobody ever expects the Spanish Inquisition.

But the various Christian Churches whose dubiously calculated "millennium" is being marked with such ridiculous hype have claimed a certain right to impose their antiquated views on at least a part of the proceedings.

With all this added to the routine doses of state-sponsored religion which this largely secular country has to put up with every Christmas, it seemed a good moment to look back at the ways great socialist and revolutionary thinkers, notably Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky have viewed religion in general and Christianity in particular.

Each of them was a convinced, passionate atheist, arguing strongly that

religion arose historically from the ignorance and oppression of early societies, and had continued and developed with state sponsorship into later years because it suited the requirements of the ruling class.

In place of the idealism of religion and semi-religious philosophies, the marxists argued for a coherent alternative materialist world view, concept of dialectical materialism, in which the world and the universe as a whole are regarded as matter in motion.

Engels summed up: "From the very early times when men, still completely ignorant of the structure of their own bodies, under the stimulus of dream apparitions came to believe that their thinking and sensations were not activities of their bodies but of a distinct soul which inhabits the body and leaves it at death, from this time men have been driven to reflect about the relation between this soul and outside world."

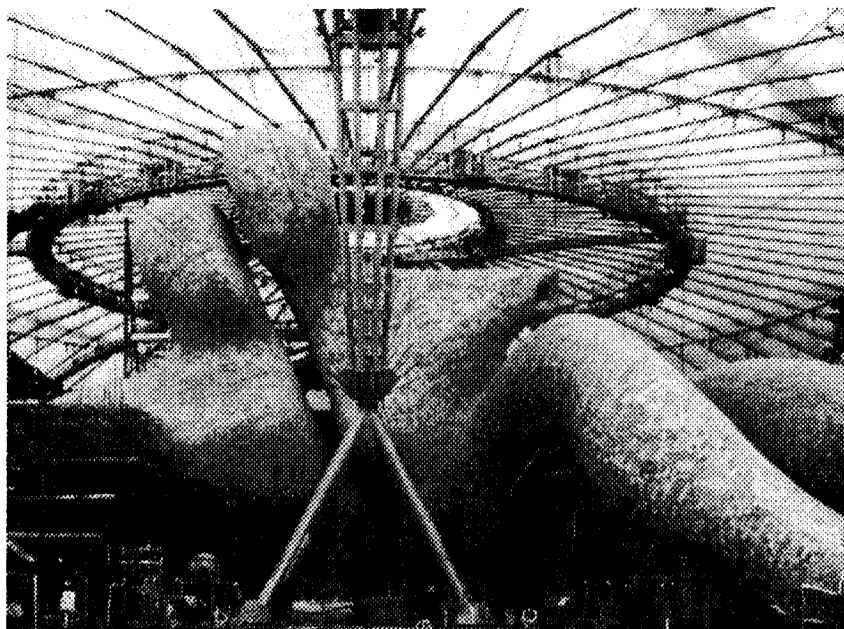
"If upon death the soul took leave of the body and lived on, there was no occasion to invent another death for it. Thus arose the idea of its immortality, which at that state of development appeared not at all as a consolation but as a fate against which it was no use fighting, and often enough, as among the Greeks, as a positive misfortune. Not religious desire for consolation but the quandary arising from the common universal ignorance of what to do with this soul, once its existence had been accepted, after the death of the body, led in a general way to the tedious notion of personal immortality."

"In an exactly similar manner the first gods arose through the personification of natural forces. And these gods in the further development of religions assumed more and more extra-mundane form, until finally by a process of abstraction, out of the many more or less limited and mutually limiting gods there arose in the minds of men the idea of one exclusive God of the monotheistic religions."

Engels goes on to challenge the notion that upheavals in religion are always linked with social change. "Even in regard to Christianity the religious stamp in revolutions of really universal significance is restricted to the first stages of the bourgeoisie's struggle for emancipation – from the 13th to the 17th century – and is to be accounted for by the entire previous history of the Middle Ages, which knew no other form of ideology than precisely religion and theology."

"But when the bourgeoisie of the 18th century was strengthened enough likewise to possess an ideology of its own, suited to its own class standpoint, it made its great and conclusive revolution, the French, appealing exclusively to juristic and political ideas, and troubling itself

To be sponsored by Body Shop? One of the first Dome exhibits takes shape



"Thus the question of the relation of thinking to being, the relation of the spirit to nature – the paramount question in the whole of philosophy – has, no less than all religions, its roots in the narrow-minded and ignorant notions of savagery."

"...The question: which is primary, spirit or nature was sharpened into this: Did God create the world, or has the world been in existence eternally?"

"The answers which the philosophers gave to this question split them into two great camps. Those

with religion only in so far as it stood it its way."

In the same pamphlet, Engels goes on to trace the history of the Christian religion. "The Roman world empire brought about the downfall of the old nationalities. The old national gods decayed, even those of the Romans, which also were patterned to suit only the narrow confines of the city of Rome."

"... The fact that already after 250 years it became the state religion suffices to show that it was the religion in correspondence with the conditions of the time."

"In the Middle Ages, in the same measure as feudalism developed, Christianity grew into the religious counterpart to it, with a corresponding feudal hierarchy. And when the burghers began to thrive, there developed, in opposition to feudal Catholicism, the Protestant heresy, which first appeared in Southern France at the time the cities there reached the highest point."

"(...) The ineradicability of the Protestant heresy corresponded to the invincibility of the rising burghers. ...

"The first great action occurred in Germany – the so-called Reformation. The burghers were neither powerful enough nor sufficiently developed to be able to unite under their banner the remaining rebellious estates – the plebeians in the towns, the lower nobility and the peasants on the land. ...

"But beside the German Luther appeared the Frenchman Calvin. While the Lutheran Reformation in Germany degenerated and reduced the country to rack and ruin, the Calvinist Reformation served as a banner for the republicans in Geneva, in Holland and in Scotland ... and provided the ideological costume for the second act of the bourgeois revolution, which was taking place in England."

"...In France the Calvinist minority was suppressed in 1685 and either Catholicised or driven out of the country. But what was the good? The forcible measures of Louis XIV only made it easier for the French bourgeoisie to carry through its revolution in the irreligious, exclusively political form which alone was suited to a developed bourgeoisie. Instead of Protestants, freethinkers took their seats in the national assemblies."

"Thereby Christianity entered into its final stage. It had become incapable for the future of serving any progressive class as the ideological garb of its aspirations. It became more and more the exclusive possession of the ruling classes and these apply it as a mere means of government, to keep the lower classes within bounds."

(extracted from *Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*).

## Tying the exploited to their exploiters

LENIN argued strongly against the writer Maxim Gorky for "God-building" and defending "the idea of God".

Gorky had written that: "God is the complex of those ideas, worked out by the tribe, the nation, mankind, which awaken and organise social feelings, having as their object to link the individual with society and to bridle zoological individualism."

Lenin, in a blunt reply argued that:

"This theory is clearly wrong and clearly reactionary. Like the Christian socialists (the worst variety of "socialism" and its worst distortion), you make use of a method which (despite your best intentions) repeats the hocus-pocus of the priests."

You eliminate from the idea of God everything about it that is historical and drawn from real life

(filth, prejudices, sanctified ignorance and degradation, on the one hand, serfdom and monarchy, on the other).



Lenin

Instead of the reality of history and life there is substituted in the idea of God, a gentle petty-bourgeois phrase (God = "ideas which awaken and organise social feelings").

Your wish in so doing is to say something "good and kind", to point out "truth and justice" and the like. But your good wish remains your personal affair, a subjective "innocent desire".

Once you have written it down, it goes out among the masses, and its significance is determined not by your good wishes, but by the relationship of social forces, the objective relationship of classes.

By virtue of that relationship it turns out (irrespective of your will and independently of your consciousness) that you have put a good colour and a sugary coating on the idea of the clericals, and Nicholas II, since in practice the idea of God helps them keep the people in slavery.

By beautifying the idea of God, you have beautified the chains with which they fetter ignorant workers and peasants.

It is untrue that God is the complex of ideas which awaken and organise social feelings. That is idealism, which suppresses the material origin of ideas.

God is (in history and in real life) first of all the complex of ideas generated by the brutish subjection of man both by external nature and by the class yoke – ideas which consolidate that subjection, lull to sleep the class struggle.

Nowadays both in Europe and in Russia any, even the most refined and best-intentioned defence or justification of the idea of God is a justification of reaction.

## Trotsky on the "opium of the people"

Leon Trotsky, too polemicalised against the notion that there could be any room for religious superstition within the revolutionary movement. Arguing against James Burnham, an American academic breaking from Marxism, who had dismissed the Marxist method of dialectical materialism as belonging in the sphere of religion.

Trotsky summed up key points succinctly:

"Religion is the opium of the people. Whoever fails to struggle against religion is unworthy of bearing the name of revolutionist. On what grounds then do you justify your refusal to fight against the dialectic if you deem it one of the varieties of religion?"

"you stopped bothering yourself long ago, as you say, about the question of religion. But you stopped it only for yourself. In addition to you, there exist all the others. Quite a few of them. We revolutionists never 'stop' bothering ourselves about religious questions, inasmuch as our task consists in emancipating from the influence of religion not only ourselves but the masses. ...

"Naturally we maintain the most considerate attitude towards the religious prejudices of a backward worker. Should he desire to fight for our programme, we would accept him as a party member; but at the same time our party would persistently educate him in the spirit of materialism and atheism."

(From *An Open Letter to Comrade Burnham*, January 1940)



# Christianity: a cobbled hybrid which helped control the masses

**Friederich Engels**

**T**he view that dominated from the free-thinkers of the Middle Ages to the Enlighteners of the 18th century, was that all religions, and therefore Christianity too, were the work of deceivers.

But a religion that brought the Roman world empire into subjection, and dominated the larger part of civilised humanity for 1,800 years, cannot be disposed of merely by declaring it to be nonsense gleaned together by frauds.

One cannot dispose of it before one succeeds in explaining its origin and its development from the historical conditions under which it arose and reached its dominating position.

The question to be solved, then, is how it came about that the popular masses in the Roman Empire so far preferred this nonsense — which was preached, into the bargain, by slaves and oppressed — to all other religions, that the ambitious Constantine finally saw in the adoption of this religion of nonsense the best means of exalting himself to the position of autocrat of the Roman world?

Bruno Bauer has contributed far more to the solution of this question than anybody else. He irrefutably proved the chronological order of the Gospels and their mutual interdependence, shown by Wilke from the purely linguistic standpoint, by the very contents of the Gospels themselves.

He exposed the utter lack of scientific spirit of Strauss' vague myth theory according to which anybody can hold for historical as much as he likes in the Gospel narrations.

Almost nothing from the whole content of the Gospels turns out to be historically provable — so that even the historical existence of a Jesus Christ can be questioned.

But Bauer has, thereby, only cleared the ground for the solution of the question: what is the origin of the ideas and thoughts that have been woven together into a sort of system in Christianity, and how did they come to dominate the world?

**B**auer studied this question until his death. His research reached its culminating point in the conclusion that the Alexandrian Jew Philo, who was still living about AD40 but was already very old, was the real father of Christianity, and that the Roman stoic Seneca was, so to speak, its uncle.

The numerous writings attributed to Philo which have reached us originate indeed in a fusion of allegorically and rationalistically conceived Jewish traditions with Greek, particularly stoic, philosophy.

This conciliation of western and eastern outlooks already contains all the essentially Christian ideas:

- the inborn sinfulness of man,
- the Logos, the Word, which is with God and is God and which becomes the mediator between God and man:
- atonement, not by sacrifices of animals, but by bringing one's own heart of God,
- and finally the essential feature, that the new religious philosophy reverses the previous world order, seeks its disciples among the poor, the miserable, the slaves, and the rejected, and despises the rich, the powerful, and the privileged, whence the precept to despise all worldly pleasure and to mortify the flesh.

On the other hand, Augustus himself saw to it that not only the God-man, but also the so-called immaculate conception became formulae imposed by the state.

He not only had Caesar and himself worshipped as gods, he also spread the notion that he, Augustus Caesar Divus, the Divine, was not the son of a human father but that his mother had conceived him of the god Apollo.



*Early Christianity had to beg, steal and borrow from Judaism and stoic philosophy*

As we see, we need only the keystone and we have the whole of Christianity in its basic features: the incarnation of the Word become man in a definite person and his sacrifice on the cross for the redemption of sinful mankind.

Truly reliable sources leave us uncertain as to when this keystone was introduced into the stoic-philonic doctrines. But this much is sure: it was not introduced by philosophers, either Philo's disciples or stoics. Religions are founded by people who feel a need for religion themselves and have a feeling for the religious needs of the masses.

As a rule, this is not the case with the classical philosophers. On the other hand, we find that in times of general decay, now, for instance, philosophy and religious dogmatism are generally current in a vulgarised and shallow form.

While classic Greek philosophy in its last forms — particularly in the Epicurean school — led to atheistic materialism, Greek vulgar philosophy led to the doctrine of a one and only God and of the immortality of the human soul.

Likewise, rationally vulgarised Judaism in mixture and intercourse with aliens and half-Jews ended by neglecting the ritual and transforming the formerly exclusively Jewish national god, Jahveh, into the one true God, the creator of heaven and earth, and by adopting the idea of the immortality of the soul which was alien to early Judaism.

Thus, monotheistic vulgar philosophy came into contact with vulgar religion, which presented it with the ready-made one and only God.

**O**ne can get an idea of what Christianity looked like in its early form by reading the so-called Book of Revelation of John: wild, confused fanaticism, only the beginnings of dogmas, only the mortification of the flesh of the so-called Christian morals, but on the other hand a multitude of visions and prophesies.

The development of the dogmas and moral doctrine belongs to a later period, in which the Gospels and the so-called Epistles of the Apostles were written.

In this — at least as regards morals — the philosophy of the stoics, of Seneca in particular, was unceremoniously made use of. Bauer proved that the Epistles often copy the latter word-for-word.

In fact, even the faithful noticed this, but

they maintained that Seneca had copied from the New Testament, though it had not yet been written in his time.

Dogma developed, on the one hand in connection with the legend of Jesus which was then taking shape, and, on the other hand, in the struggle between Christians of Jewish and of pagan origin.

The Roman conquest dissolved in all subjugated countries, first, directly, the former political conditions, and then, indirectly, also the social conditions of life.

● Firstly by substituting for the former organisation according to estates (slavery apart) the simple distinction between Roman citizens and subjects.

● Secondly, and mainly, by exacting tribute in the name of the Roman state.

If, under the empire, a limit was set as far as possible in the interest of the state to the governors' thirst for wealth, that thirst was replaced by ever more effective and oppressive taxation for the benefit of the state treasury, the effect of which was terribly destructive.

● Thirdly, Roman law was finally administered everywhere by Roman judges, while the native social system was declared invalid.

**T**hese three levers necessarily developed a tremendous levelling power, particularly when they were applied for several hundred years to populations — the most vigorous sections of which had been either suppressed or taken away into slavery in the battles preceding, accompanying, and often following, the conquest.

Social relations in the provinces came nearer and nearer to those obtaining in the capital and in Italy. The population became more and more sharply divided into three classes, thrown together out of the most varying elements and nationalities:

● rich people, including not a few emancipated slaves, big landowners or usurers or both at once, like Seneca, the uncle of Christianity;

● propertyless free people, who in Rome were fed and amused by the state — in the provinces they got on as they could by themselves —

● and finally the great mass, the slaves.

In the face of the state, i.e. the emperor, the first two classes had as few rights as the slaves in the face of their masters. From the time of Tiberius to that of Nero, in particular, it was a practice to sentence rich Roman

citizens to death in order to confiscate their property.

The support of the government was — materially, the army, which was more like an army of hired foreign soldiers than the old Roman peasant army, and morally, the general view that there was no way out of that condition; that not, indeed, this or that Caesar, but the empire based on military domination was an immutable necessity.

It was in the midst of this general economic, political, intellectual, and moral decadence that Christianity appeared. It entered into a resolute antithesis to all previous religions.

In all previous religions, ritual had been the main thing. Only by taking part in the sacrifices and processions, and in the Orient by observing the most detailed diet and cleanliness precepts, could one show to what religion one belonged. While Rome and Greece were tolerant in the last respect, there was in the Orient a rage for religious prohibitions that contributed no little to the final downfall.

People of two different religions (Egyptians, Persians, Jews, Chaldeans) could not eat or drink together, perform any every-day act together, or hardly speak to each other. It was largely due to this segregation of man from man that the Orient collapsed. Christianity knew no distinctive ceremonies, not even the sacrifices and processions of the classic world. By thus rejecting all national religions and their common ceremonies, and addressing itself to all peoples without distinction, it became the first possible world religion.

Judaism, too, with its new universal god, had made a start on the way to becoming a universal religion; but the children of Israel always remained an aristocracy among the believers and the circumcised, and Christianity itself had to get rid of the notion of the superiority of the Jewish Christians (still dominant in the so-called Book of Revelation of John) before it could really become a universal religion.

**I**slam, on the other hand, by preserving its specifically Oriental ritual, limited the area of its propagation to the Orient and North Africa, conquered and populated anew by Arab Bedouins; here it could become the dominating religion, but not in the West.

Secondly, Christianity struck a chord that was bound to echo in countless hearts. To all complaints about the wickedness of the times and the general material and moral distress, Christian consciousness of sin answered: It is so and it cannot be otherwise; thou art in blame, ye are all to blame for the corruption of the world, thine and your own internal corruption! And where was the man who could deny it? *Mea culpa!* The admission of each one's share in the responsibility for the general unhappiness was irrefutable, and was made the precondition for the spiritual salvation which Christianity at the same time announced.

And this spiritual salvation was so instituted that it could be easily understood by members of every old religious community. The idea of atonement to placate the offended deity was current in all the old religions; how could the idea of self-sacrifice of the mediator atoning once for all for the sins of humanity not easily find ground there?

Christianity, therefore, clearly expressed the universal feeling that men themselves are guilty of the general corruption as the consciousness of sin of each one; at the same time, it provided, in the death-sacrifice of his judge, a form of the universally longed-for internal salvation from the corrupt world, the consolation of consciousness; it thus again proved its capacity to become a world religion and, indeed, a religion which suited the world as it then was.

So it happened that, among the thousands of prophets and preachers in the desert that filled that period of countless religious innovations, the founders of Christianity alone met with success.

Not only Palestine, but the entire Orient swarmed with such founders of religions, and between them there raged what can be called a Darwinian struggle for ideological existence. Thanks mainly to the elements mentioned above, Christianity won the day.

How it gradually developed its character of world religion by natural selection in the struggle of sects against one another and against the pagan world is taught in detail by the history of the Church in the first three centuries.

*Extracted from Engels: letter on death of Bruno Bauer*



East German protests initially reflected strong socialist content



Polish leader Lech Walesa with the friends who helped steer Solidarnosc towards market reforms

FOR THE bourgeois, history, we are variously told, is a backward-looking science, whether as "a way of accurately predicting the past" or in the words of Henry Ford, simply listing "one damned thing after another".

But as a marxist journal, **Socialist Outlook** sees the analysis of the past as a means better to understand the motor forces of history, and grasp the new situation and the potential for change today. And we also have to attempt to forecast how events will develop: it can be useful to look back and see if we were right.

Ten years ago the fall of the Berlin Wall represented a watershed in the collapse of the power of the Soviet Union – and with it the ability of other Stalinist bureaucracies with Soviet military and economic backing to control the working class in the grotesquely deformed "workers' states" across Eastern Europe.

Everyone now knows that the pro-market, restorationist forces won the day. Even now the brutal impact of this is being felt by the working class in Eastern Europe. In Russia, average life expectancy has fallen by over 10 years; in many East European countries living standards have fallen. Global capitalism has in general been reluctant to invest the capital required to rebuild the crumbling infrastructure left by four decades of stalinist rule.

It is comparatively easy to look back now at the changes which have occurred in Eastern Europe since 1989 – not least the reunification of Germany – and to see them as somehow inevitable.

It is easy with hindsight to identify the stronger forces at play in what may at the time have been a less obvious situation: according to this reading of events, the ossified bureaucracies were toppled by a movement demanding market freedoms – summed up at the time as "shoppers' rights" – and capitalist restoration.

But this reading of events loses sight of the apparent strength, especially in East Germany, of socialist currents among the opposition forces which mobilised to challenge – and defeat Eric Honecker's Stalinist regime. Had these currents persisted they would potentially have opened up a very different way ahead for the struggles throughout Eastern Europe.

It is this possibility of things being otherwise, the possibility of a coherent, anti-capitalist, working class, internationalist response – and the need to build an organisation and a leadership to take it forward – which must be the starting point for socialists.

This is why we are reprinting here our original analysis of the events drafted as they were unfolding, and seeking to address the issues for socialists on the ground. The document was drafted in the autumn of 1989, before the fall of the Romanian Ceausescu regime, and published early in 1990 in *Socialist Outlook* magazine.

## When the Wall came tumbling down

# Where next for workers of Eastern Europe?

**Extracts from a resolution unanimously adopted by Socialist Outlook supporters in January 1990.**

1990 will be the year of elections in at least, Hungary, the GDR, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and probably Bulgaria as well. In each of these countries the elections will in effect be a plebiscite on the continued rule of the Stalinist parties. In each of them, the Stalinists will certainly suffer crushing defeats. It is the end of an era.

The eruption of the East European masses in an attempt to overthrow bureaucratic rule, together with the events in the Soviet Union, represent the most important development in world politics since the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949. At stake is the continued existence of Stalinism as a significant force in world politics.

The whole world order which arose out of the defeat of Nazi imperialism, finalised at Yalta and Potsdam, is now in question. The division of the European

working class imposed by the 'great powers' is rapidly being swept away. The 'bipolar' character of world politics, dominated by two armed camps, has been shaken to its foundations.

As we approach the 21st century a fundamental turning point has been reached: there is an historic opportunity for the victory of the political revolution, but also great dangers that the working class could be robbed of the social gains inherent in the bureaucratised workers' states.

The revolution underway has shatteringly confirmed the Trotskyist critique of what the Stalinists called 'actually existing socialism'. Trotsky's watchword of defiance towards what was then an ascendent and victorious Stalinism – that 'the laws of history are stronger than the bureaucratic apparatus' – has turned from a slogan to dramatic reality. To turn this crisis into working class victories, Trotsky's abiding concern – the 'crisis of working class leadership' must be resolved.

### The roots of the crisis

The mass upsurge against bureaucratic rule now affects every east European country. What has clearly sparked this crisis is the growing

realisation that the Gorbachev regime in the USSR lacks either the will or the capacity to intervene militarily in Eastern Europe to save Stalinist rule as happened in Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968.

December's meeting of the Warsaw Pact in Moscow was symbolic in this respect: Gorbachev in effect told the East Europeans to go their own way: the Soviet Union can no longer afford its huge subsidies to the other Comecon countries.

The removal of the protective cover of the Red Army rapidly revealed the fundamental weakness and instability of bureaucratic rule.

As a parasitic layer, and not a social class, the bureaucracy lacks the deep social roots and mechanisms of support enjoyed by the imperialist bourgeoisies. Its rule has relied entirely on its monopoly of politics, imposed by force.

Compelled to face their own working masses alone, the party apparatuses and secret police forces have crumbled.

While the last military action to crush a workers' revolt – the December 1981 coup by General Jaruzelski in Poland – was carried out by domestic forces, it was backed by the perceived threat of direct Russian

intervention under the 'Brezhnev doctrine'. Now that doctrine is at an end.

Underlying the revolt is the near-exasperation of hundreds of millions of East European citizens at the failure of the bureaucratic system to deliver either material prosperity, or political and cultural freedom.

Despite repeated subventions from the Soviet Union, and vast borrowing from Western banks in the 1970s (especially by Hungary and Poland), the East European economies failed to develop beyond basic industrialisation and the provision of a social welfare system.

With the exception of East Germany and Czechoslovakia, even these gains have been put in question. Every East European citizen understands thoroughly the waste, inefficiency and sclerosis of the centralised bureaucratic command economy.

These failings have been especially highlighted in the past 15 years, as the gap between these countries and the advanced capitalist countries has increased, both in terms of productive technique and the standard of living of the employed sections of the working class.

Bureaucratic rule, unlike capitalism in boom periods, contains no fundamental mechanism towards innova-





tion and the permanent revolutionising of productive technique: indeed structurally inbuilt in these economies are powerful tendencies towards the endless reproduction of the status quo.

That is why the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have fallen behind in the information technology revolution.

However deep the attachment of the proletariat to the social gains of a non-capitalist system, the knowledge that workers in the West are on average more prosperous and in many respects more free, has exerted a permanent pressure.

While the lives of the East European masses are incomparably better than those of the masses in the 'third world', they are still – by the yardstick of the overall development of human productive technique and culture – drab, stultifying and impoverished.

Now hundreds of millions of people have decided that to gain a better life. They will not go on in the old way, and their leaders are incapable of going on in the old way: these are the classic conditions for the emergence of pre-revolutionary situations.

The pivotal events of the crisis have occurred in East Germany. Until the autumn of 1989 it seemed that Eastern Europe was undergoing two separate courses of development – that of Poland and Hungary towards radical marketisation and political reform, and that of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany (and in a different way Romania) remaining true to the Stalinist model.

But the mass movement of the East German workers smashed this dichotomy and led directly to the events in Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, leaving the Ceausescu dynasty in Romania isolated and under siege.

## The historic stakes

In the medium term there are evidently three possible outcomes of the present upsurge, and they might not be the same for each country. Either capitalism will be restored; or the political revolution win; or bureaucratic rule will be consolidated.

But in an overall historic sense the choice is between the restoration of capitalism and workers' power.

In part the outcome depends on the close interaction between the events in East Europe and those in the Soviet Union. If the crisis of perestroika were to result in the fall of Gorbachev and the restoration of a hardline Stalinist leadership, this could well spur a counter-offensive by the bureaucracy in the East European countries.

But this seems an unlikely development, and any sharp attempt to restore the previous system of bureaucratic domination, especially one based on force, would result in a gigantic explosion, with incalculable consequences.

More likely, the events in Eastern Europe which have now overtaken those in the USSR itself, can easily flow back into the Soviet Union, fuelling demands for an end to the Communist monopoly of power. Such a development would really place Gorbachev's position in jeopardy: the CPSU's monopoly is central for the continuance of bureaucratic rule in the Soviet Union itself.

Leaving aside some unexpected and momentous event in the Soviet Union, the outcome is much more likely to lie in a protracted triangular struggle between restorationist forces aided by imperialism; the bureaucracy, or rather those sections of it which want to defend Stalinist rule; and the working class.

In practice, as most dramatically

shown by Poland, whole sections of the bureaucracy will aid the process of trying to defeat the workers economically and politically in order to prepare the ground for Western investment and the restoration of capitalism.

The main obstacle to the restoration of capitalism is the working class itself.

The working class in each country must be defeated in a series of frontal battles if property is to be re-privatised, a domestic bureaucratic-bourgeoisie established, and the social gains of the masses wiped out.

Two obviously related questions are at issue here: the level of mobilisation of the masses, and their overall political consciousness. Both are presently in deep flux.

While a spontaneous fight against austerity can delay the restoration of capitalism, only a conscious fight for a democratic socialist order can lead to the victory of the political revolution. Two central problems raise themselves here.

First, it is an open question to what extent the emergence of any form of 'socialism' and collectivism by the Stalinist rulers has succeeded in driving the masses into the arms of capitalism.

For example, while in East Germany socialist and collectivist values seem to be strong, the pull of Western prosperity on sections of the population is also strong.

Beyond that, even those like Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia who are suspicious of the West, and even most of those committed to some form of democratic socialism, generally remain committed to 'marketisation' as the sole form of possible economic restructuring.

This is an historic gain for pro-capitalist ideologues, and a mammoth problem for building a genuine socialist opposition.

Secondly, while the restoration of capitalism implies the defeat of Stalinism and an historic vindication of all currents that argue for

socialism with democracy, nonetheless the restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe – especially if combined with a similar outcome in the USSR – would be a world historic defeat for the working class.

In this respect it is absolutely irresponsible to ignore – as do state capitalist and bureaucratic collectivist currents – the weight of the deformed workers' states in the world relationship of forces. With their defeat, the continued existence of the Cuban workers' state and of the revolutionary government in Nicaragua would be in peril.

Imperialism would be much freer to engage in adventures, not only, for example, towards Vietnam, but against the whole third world. Imperialism rampant would rapidly lead to resurgent militarism, especially in Japan and Germany.

New inter-imperialist wars could not be ruled out. The reimposition of the imperialist yoke in Eastern Europe is a nightmare scenario.

An opposite scenario, the possibility of the emergence of new democratic socialist states, or even a militant fight in that direction, could have an explosive impact on the, working class in every country, but especially on the workers of the advanced capitalist world, including Europe.

The danger for imperialism is not just that of the attractive power of democratic socialist states if they are established, but of the lessons of mass mobilisation. Already there is no doubt that political freedoms are greater in East Germany today than they are in any advanced capitalist state.

The right to demonstrate is untrammelled, and everyone can inspect their own police file – if it hasn't been destroyed. The power of the secret police, including the right to surveillance, is completely destroyed. The dangers of these lessons spilling over into Western Europe are immense.

To maximise the opportunities for the working class in this situation requires the construction of a revolutionary political leadership – there can be no political revolution without it. We do not define such a leadership as necessarily explicitly Trotskyist; but it must engage in a struggle around the main themes and demands of the political revolution, on the axis of socialism with democracy.

This must include a rejection of marketisation as the main form of economic restructuring, and the building of organisations of workers' power at the level of the factory and throughout society. Through the fight to build organised bodies of support, revolutionary currents and parties in every east European country, and, through ceaseless contacts and political intervention, we and our co-thinkers internationally can make a major contribution to the creation of such a leadership.

## The programme of political revolution

The programme of political revolution which we advocate must go beyond attempts at 'reform' of the system and the establishment of parliamentary-type democracy. Key to our demands must be the fight for the self-organisation and political independence of the working class from Stalinist and bourgeois forces.

While we do not write off reform Communists at the base of the Stalinist parties, history has already answered the question of whether these parties can be transformed into instruments for socialist democracy: by and large they are finished; their working class base will increasingly look elsewhere.

The fight for workers' self-organisation must involve the fight for independent trade unions and workers' councils independent of the Stalinist parties. The most important example of develop-

ments of this kind was the mass working class movement and an extensive network of workers' councils which characterised the emergence of Solidarnosc in Poland.

Under these conditions the working class, as an organised force, were the driving force in the process of political revolution. It involves the fight for new political parties based on socialist democracy and the programme of workers' self-management.

Socialists must combine the fight for socialist democracy with a struggle around transitional demands in defence of the material interests of the workers which will everywhere come under attack. Key among these demands are a sliding scale of wages to protect the workers against the rampant inflation in several East European countries, and the fight for a 35 hour week against the long working hours and growing unemployment. This fight must be complemented by the demand for radical egalitarianism and the end of all vestiges of bureaucratic privilege.

Integral to the fight for political revolution is the struggle for real, as opposed to juridical, equality for women. In east European countries women are completely integrated into the workforce – in the GDR for example they are 51 per cent of the labour force. But in general real equality does not exist, either in terms of employment opportunities or in terms of childcare or the socialisation of domestic labour. In several countries abortion and contraception rights are de facto restricted.

The fight against ecological catastrophe assumes particular force in eastern Europe. Stalinism's absolute priority to extensive production and large-scale industry has created some of the worst ecological problems in the world.

Thus the programme of political revolution must include the demand for a workers' inspectorate to supervise the environment and the transition to ecologically-sustainable economic growth.

In several parts of eastern Europe the national question increasingly raises its head. Socialists demand the right of national self-determination, including the right of separation, for oppressed nationalities.

Above all, the programme of political revolution must be centred on the fight for a democratically centralised planned economy, under workers' control. The first stage of this is the fight for workers' veto over central economic plans and a regime of workers' control at the level of the factory.

This programme does not exclude all marketisation initiatives – for example the creation of small firms in the service sector with profits supervised by the state, or agricultural and other cooperatives. But the key to regenerating the economies is the unleashing of the creative power of the masses, around production objectives democratically decided.

Rational democratic planning assumes not autarky, but an international division of labour. That is why the fight for an international federation of democratic socialist republics, in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union is vital. But the key to regenerating production historically is to link production and markets east and west – in particular to unify the economies of the Soviet Union and Germany. This is the centre of the demand for a United Socialist States of Europe.

In particular the programme of political revolution involves the struggle for democratic workers' councils (soviets), the separation of party and state and the smashing of Stalinist control of the police, military and secret police.

### November

Sat 27

#### London Reclaim Our Rights Campaign Organising Conference

with Tony Benn introducing his Trade Union Rights Bill. 11 a.m.-4p.m., Birkbeck College, Malet St., London WC1.

#### National Protest "Close Down Campsfield"

6th Anniversary Demonstration 12.00pm to 2.00pm Main gate, Campsfield Detention Centre Langford Lane, Kidlington, Oxford

#### Labour Left Briefing AGM,

11 a.m.-5p.m., Kingsway College.

Sun 28

#### Memorial meeting for Baruch Hirson,

3.30p.m., Brockway Room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Organised by Revolutionary History.

Mon 29

#### 'Stop the Millennium Round'.

Public meeting, 7p.m., Committee room 14, House of Commons, London SW1.

Tuesday 30

#### Reclaim the Railways

Euston station - speakers, music etc. Called by Reclaim the Streets and the Strike Support Group with the support of the London Transport Regional Council of the RMT.

### December

Wednesday 1

#### London Socialist Outlook Public Meeting

"Socialists and the Second World War" with Charlie van Gelderen, Club Room, Conway Hall 7pm

Thursday 2

#### Public meeting Stop Imprisoning Refugees

7pm Ealing Town Hall with John McDonnell MP, Tim Baster (Bail for Immigration Detainees Group) and an ex-detainee

Sun 5

#### Campaign for Mayor of London,

Public meeting with Frank Dobson (invited), Glenda Jackson and Ken Livingstone. Called by Brent UNISON, Brent GMB, Brent East CLP, Kilburn Pensioners, Brent Trades Council, Harlesden RMT and Willesden FBU. 7p.m., Willesden Green Library Centre, 95 High Road, Willesden, London NW10.

Mon 6

#### "The Sale of the Millennium"

Greater London Association of Trades Councils Public meeting on New Labour's plans for PFI and PPP. Discussion introduced by London leaders from several unions. 7p.m., Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

Weds 8

#### The Campaign for a 35-hour week

Brent Trades Council public meeting, with Bob Crowe, Assistant General Secretary, RMT, Geoff Martin, London Convenor, UNISON, J.C. Marquiset, CGT France, and Lufthansa Skycheffs strikers. 7.30p.m., Willesden Suite, Willesden Library Centre, 95 High Road, Willesden, London NW10.

Thurs 9

#### The Truth About Privatisation

Ealing Trades Council public meeting, with Bob Crowe, Assistant General Secretary, RMT, John Lister (London Health Emergency) and speaker from air traffic control, 7.30pm Ealing Town Hall.

Saturday 11

#### Picket Harmondsworth Detention Centre,

12 noon - 1.30pm Take U3 bus from Heathrow or 81 bus from stop opposite Hounslow West tube station. Bring donations of phone cards to give to refugees

January

Sat 15

#### Network of Socialist Campaign Groups AGM

Sheffield. More details from Christine Shawcroft, 0171 515 3868.

Saturday 22

#### Bloody Sunday March,

12 noon, Whitehall Place, London.

# Rescuing Marx from ignorant "modernisers"

Karl Marx by Francis When (Fourth Estate; London, £20)  
Reviewed by Geoff Ryan

Rather surprisingly Francis When has done the socialist movement a tremendous service by writing this biography of Karl Marx. Surprisingly, because earlier this year When made use of his regular Guardian column to attack those who opposed NATO's war against Serbia.

According to When 'It is time to strip away the mythology and try to rediscover Karl Marx the man'. In this he certainly succeeds. The Karl Marx that emerges from the pages of When's book is a 'figure of flesh and blood'. He is neither the 'demonic begetter of all evil' nor a 'secular God' but a real human being, with many of the vices, foibles and virtues of real human beings.

He exhibits many of the prejudices of nineteenth century men of middle class origins, especially towards women and non-European peoples. He is not beyond boasting of the aristocratic origins of his wife Jenny. He struggles against poverty and frequent illness, both of which, to varying extents, are sometimes self-imposed. He wants his daughters to enjoy the trappings of middle class women of the time and, therefore, often lives beyond his means. His illnesses are often a way of avoiding concentrating on a task, a product at times of self-doubt.

At the same time Marx can also be extremely arrogant and argumentative and often devotes large amounts of time to writing vast tracts denouncing political opponents, most of whom have long since disappeared into obscurity.

However, although When claims his purpose is to show 'Karl Marx the man' he goes way beyond this aim. He rescues Marx's ideas from both virulent anti-Marxists, who seek to demonize him, and those who misuse Marx in order to justify their own crimes. When totally rejects claims that Marx's ideas inevitably led to Stalinism. 'Only a fool could hold Marx responsible for the Gulag; but there is, alas, a ready supply of fools'.

When also takes issue with those who have tried to portray Marx as anti-Semitic, a self-hating Jew. He insists that, although Marx frequently used anti-Semitic epithets against his political opponents, many of his remarks have been taken out of context. In fact Marx insisted on equal rights for Jews though he was hostile to Judaism. But this was at one with Marx's hostility to all religions, not an example of anti-Semitism.

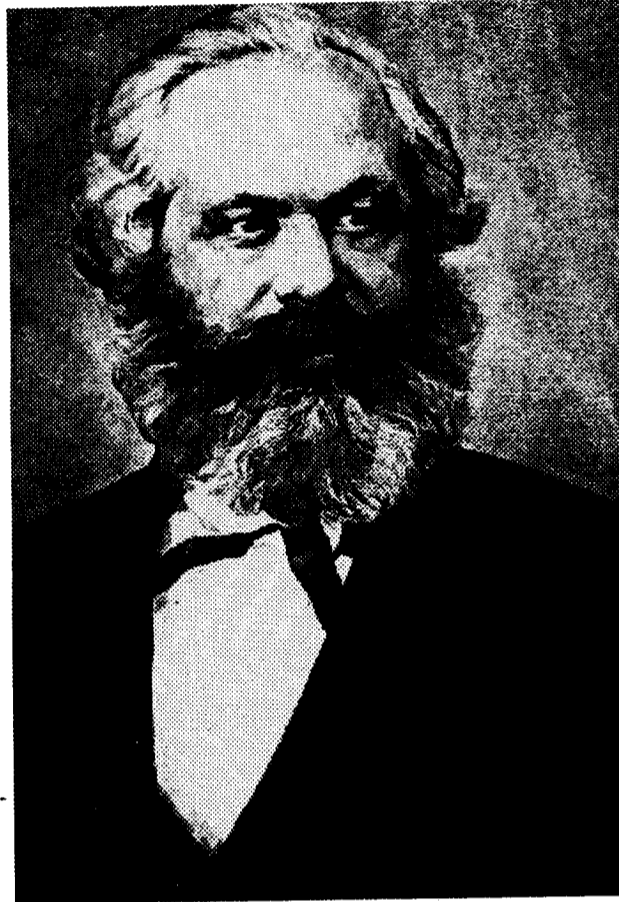
However, When insists, it is necessary to understand exactly what Marx meant by the much quoted, but frequently misunderstood, assertion that 'religion is the opium of the people'. Marx's attitude, in fact, is much more subtle and shows the importance of dialectics in his thought.

"Religious suffering is at one and the same time the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people."

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism, in response to grinding poverty, imperialist domination and corruption of local ruling classes, especially those who falsely claim to be 'socialist' is eloquent testimony to the relevance today of Marx's ideas.

The strength of When's book is that he rescues Marx's ideas by insisting that they are still relevant today.

"Today's pundits and politicians who fancy themselves as modern thinkers like to mention the buzz-word "globalisation" at every opportunity - without realising that



Marx was already on the case in 1848.

"The globe-straddling dominance of McDonald's and MTV would not have surprised him in the least. The shift in financial power from the Atlantic to the Pacific - thanks to the Asian Tiger economies and the silicon boom towns of west-coast America - was predicted by Marx more than a century before Bill Gates was born."

Although Marx's work is often dismissed as 'crude dogma' When insists this is usually by people - such as Tony Blair - who show no sign of ever having read him. As When shows, Marx actually had 'a ceaselessly inquisitive, subtle and undogmatic mind'.

Marx recognised the tremendous achievements of capitalism. His analysis of the nature of capitalism drew on the writings of classical bourgeois economists such as Adam Smith and David Ricardo. Marx 'used their own words and logic to expose the shortcomings of their own theories' - in particular their belief that private property was 'a primordial human condition'. Marx showed that 'there was nothing fixed or immutable about it'.

When defends Marx against detractors by arguing that his economic predictions can be subjected to scientific examination.

Marx predicted 'we would see periodic recessions, an ever-growing dependence on technology and the growth of huge, quasi-monopolistic corporations spreading their sticky tentacles all over the world in search of new markets to exploit'. As When says 'If none of this had happened, we might be forced to agree that the old boy was talking poppycock'. However, he continues, 'The boom-bust cycles of Western economies in the twentieth century, like the globe-girdling dominance of Bill Gates's Microsoft, suggest otherwise'.

When also takes issue with those who

claim that Marx predicted the 'progressive immiseration' of the proletariat. He argues, quite correctly, that Marx actually predicted a relative - not an absolute - decline in wages under capitalism. This, as When says, 'is self-evidently true...however many microwave ovens the workers can afford'. Moreover, Marx was not solely concerned with material impoverishment: 'such intangibles as "alienation" and "moral degradation" also form part of Marx's analysis. The history of the twentieth century provides striking confirmation of this.

While When is right to insist on Marx's prediction of relative

impoverishment he also shows, unconsciously, a weakness in his analysis. Capitalism cannot be reduced to the advanced capitalist states of the west.

With one or two exceptions, the states of Africa, Asia and Latin America are also capitalist states. In those states there has not simply been a relative but an absolute pauperisation.

Marx lived too early to see the rise of imperialism. His analysis, therefore, tended to be Euro-centric. Marx, of course, did write about colonialism and protested about the brutal treatment of the colonial peoples.

But he also believed that capitalism was progressive, and that the suffering of the colonial peoples was a necessary stage in the development of capitalism. Hence Marx believed that British domination of India was historically progressive.

However, Marx believed that capitalist rule in India would be ended either by the British working class overthrowing capitalism in the imperialist heartland or by the Indian masses themselves developing sufficient political consciousness to overthrow foreign capitalist domination.

Francis When has unfortunately opted for an approach diametrically opposed to that of Marx. Rather than advocating that the oppressed people of Kosova would be liberated either by the Serbian working class establishing a socialist society or by themselves defeating Serbian oppression, When supported imperialist intervention which aimed at preventing Kosovan independence. It is certainly tempting to conclude that When's failure to criticise the weaknesses in Marx's economic theories, particularly the lack of a concept of imperialism, led Francis When to such a wrong position.

You've seen some articles: now buy the magazine!

International Viewpoint offers special low rates (for new subscribers only!)

■ Britain £20: cheques to Outlook International, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

(Also available in USA \$35: Canada \$40:

Australia \$35: New Zealand \$35: South

Africa R80: Sweden 330 SEK: Denmark

300 DKK: Hong Kong \$120 (These and other

agent addresses available on request).



# Boxing clever

Redemption Song: Muhammad Ali and the spirit of the sixties, by Mike Marqusee (Verso, £17.99)

**Reviewed by Susan Moore**

I DON'T LIKE boxing. Its not my sport, I'm afraid. But then people I know who (strange creatures) don't like cricket have enjoyed and appreciated Mike Marqusee's books on cricket, so I was determined to read his latest offering "Redemption Song - Muhammad Ali and the Spirit of the Sixties". I was certainly not disappointed.

I didn't think I would be, from the moment I saw a copy - Verso have done themselves proud with the design. This smaller book is easier to hold and has a wonderful photo of Ali and Malcolm X on the cover.

And the style was typical Marqusee - a mixture of closely argued political polemic and graceful metaphor.

Most importantly, I was interested in the subject, despite my dislike of boxing. I was 9 when Cassius Clay became the World Heavyweight Champion and then became Muhammad Ali. I knew even then that something important politically was going on with both these

events and wanted - but had no means to find out more. This was my opportunity to do that - and much more.

The book is in some ways rather different from the author's previous works because more of it is telling a story - and a story that focuses on the life, actions and ideas of one individual - although it interweaves this tale with many other personalities and broader political developments.

That interplay is done in an almost seamless way - making the man live for those more familiar with the background and for those drawn by the individual colouring in the equally vital context.

There were sections that

were more familiar to someone who has read Marqusee's previous work. Early in the book, we are treated to a basic outline of the social history of boxing - which while not making me want to watch the "sport" certainly did lead me to understand its class and racial basis in a way that I had previously not considered.

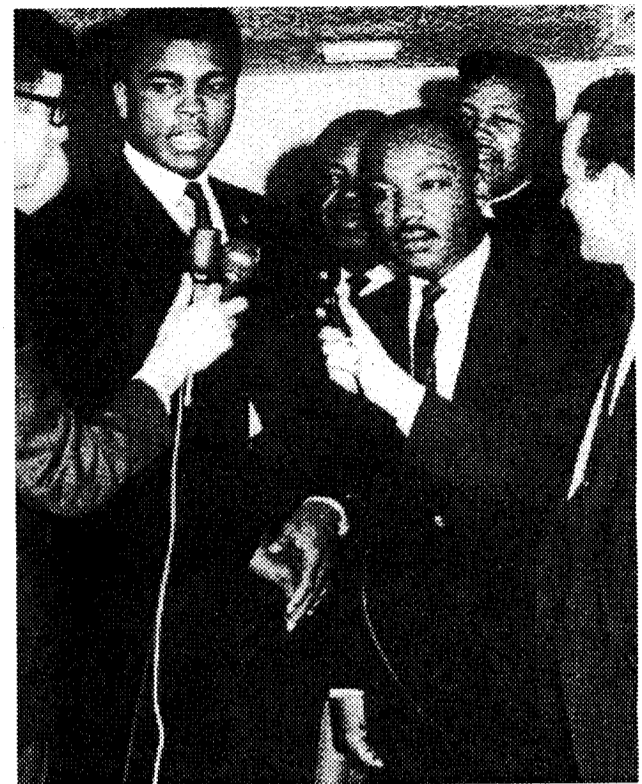
Like many readers, some of the topics it dealt with were familiar to me but others were not. Whichever it was I remained engrossed pretty much all of the time - though I confess that my least favourite section was that which made the comparison and contrast between Ali and Bob Dylan.

I'm not sure what jarred - perhaps its just that Dylan was important to my growing up and becoming active, so I resist the throwing of stones even this time later - but I think its more than that.

On the other hand, the most powerful message from this section - and possibly from the whole book - was undoubtedly the way in which the participation of black people - including Ali himself - in the anti-war movement has been effectively ignored - the way so much else of Black History has been.

I was nervous about how the question of the Nation of Islam would be dealt with, how Ali's famous Rumble in the Jungle in Mobuto's Zaire would be depicted.

But though it is clear that Marqusee respects and is



Using his fame to promote the fight for black people: Ali with civil rights leader Martin Luther King

engrossed by his subject, this involvement does not restrict his ability to criticise when that is what is needed.

On the question of the Nation of Islam, Marqusee is not soft at all, though he explains that the organisation that Clay joined in 1962 was different in many ways from the Nation today.

In many respects however the differences are products as much of the change in political circumstances as of the different personalities of the respective leaders.

On the mythic fight with Foreman, while calling Ali's victory "a triumph of intelligence and sheer intensity of personality over impersonal brawn" (p274), Marqusee also explains that the political aspi-

rations behind the contest to "herald a new era of reciprocity between America and Africa, mediated by African Americans were betrayed. The fight in Kinshasa proved a staging-post in a path of development that would leave Africa at an ever greater economic and political disadvantage... To Basil Davidson, Mobuto's Zaire exemplified 'a degradation which seemed unthinkable during the early years of post colonial independence.' He cited the murder of Lumumba (by Mobuto) as a 'turning point' in the downfall". (p275-6)

All in all I thoroughly enjoyed the book and learnt a lot from it - but I still don't like boxing.



## Socialist OUTLOOK

### Where we stand

IN THE NINETIES, millions of women and men have taken part in mobilisations against the evils of capitalism and the bureaucratic dictatorships. This reflects the fact that humanity face widening dangers. Ecological, military, social and economic devastation faces millions of people.

Many more people recognise the barbaric nature of capitalism. In a situation where the inability of the social democratic and communist parties to provide socialist solutions is becoming clearer, the task of creating new leaderships remains ahead.

**Socialist Outlook** is written and sold by socialists committed to this struggle. We are the British supporters of the world-wide marxist organisation, the Fourth International. We stand for the revolutionary transformation of society and a pluralist, socialist democracy world wide.

The overall goal which we pursue is the emancipation of all human beings from every form of exploitation, oppression, alienation and violence.

Socialism must be under the control of ordinary people, democratic, pluralist, multi-party, feminist, ecologist, anti-militarist and internationalist. It must abolish wage slavery and national oppression.

The working class is the backbone of unity among all the exploited and oppressed. The working class and its allies must uncompromisingly fight against capitalism and for a clear programme of action in order to gradually acquire the experience and consciousness needed to defeat capitalism at the decisive moment of crisis.

The movements of women, lesbians and gay men, and black people to fight their particular forms of oppression make an essential contribution to the struggle for a different society. They are organised around the principle "None so fit to break the chains as those who wear them".

The whole working class needs to fully commit itself to these struggles. Furthermore we fight for a strategic alliance between workers and these organisations - an alliance which respects their legitimate autonomy.

By building simultaneously revolutionary organisations in each country and a revolutionary international, we aim to guide and encompass the global interests of the workers and oppressed. By building a united struggle against exploitation and oppression we aim to ensure the survival of the human race. If you think this is worth fighting for, and you like what you read in *Socialist Outlook*, why not join us? Drop a line to us at **PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU**, and we'll be in touch.

## Long-playing Chomsky

Essential Classics in Politics: Noam Chomsky CD Rom £25.99

This CD contains 7 major works complete and unabridged

Noam Chomsky has been described as 'the world's greatest dissident' and 'arguably the most important intellectual alive'. For 30 years his views have alerted an increasingly concerned public to the true nature of power. His perceptive descriptions of how people are excluded from decision making and policy formation provide new insights into major events in the world today.

This highly useful resource consists of seven of his most important works on disc, with a powerful index. While there is no way it replaces the printed word, it certainly provides a very useful supplement.

It includes:  
 ■ **WORLD ORDERS, OLD AND NEW** - New Edition

In this widely acclaimed study of global politics,

Noam Chomsky offers a devastating critique of conventional definitions of the 'new world order'. It is, he argues, nothing more than an ingenious piece of 'historical engineering', whereby the pretexts for the Cold War - nuclear threat, Eastern Bloc menace - have been deftly replaced by a new set of convenient justifications for a Western agenda that remains largely unchanged.

■ **POWERS AND PROSPECTS, Reflections on Human Nature and the Social Order.**

From East Timor to the Middle East, from the nature of democracy to our place in the natural world, from intellectual politics to the politics of language, Powers and Prospects provides a scathing critique of orthodox views and government policy, and outlines other paths that can lead to better understanding and more constructive action.

■ **CLASS WARFARE, Interviews with David Barsamian.**

Western societies are

divided more clearly than ever before into the haves and the have-nots, the needy and the greedy. Neoliberal doctrines have been reshaped into more effective instruments of oppression and domination.

Through a fascinating dialogue with long-time collaborator David Barsamian, Noam Chomsky explores this growing economic and social crisis. Class Warfare is a powerful road-map to the emerging global capitalism

■ **The Fateful Triangle**

This is an updated version of Chomsky's seminal tome on Middle East politics, with a foreword to the new edition by Edward Said as well as chapters on the Oslo and Wye accords.

It is an essential tool to anyone who wants to understand the politics of the region.

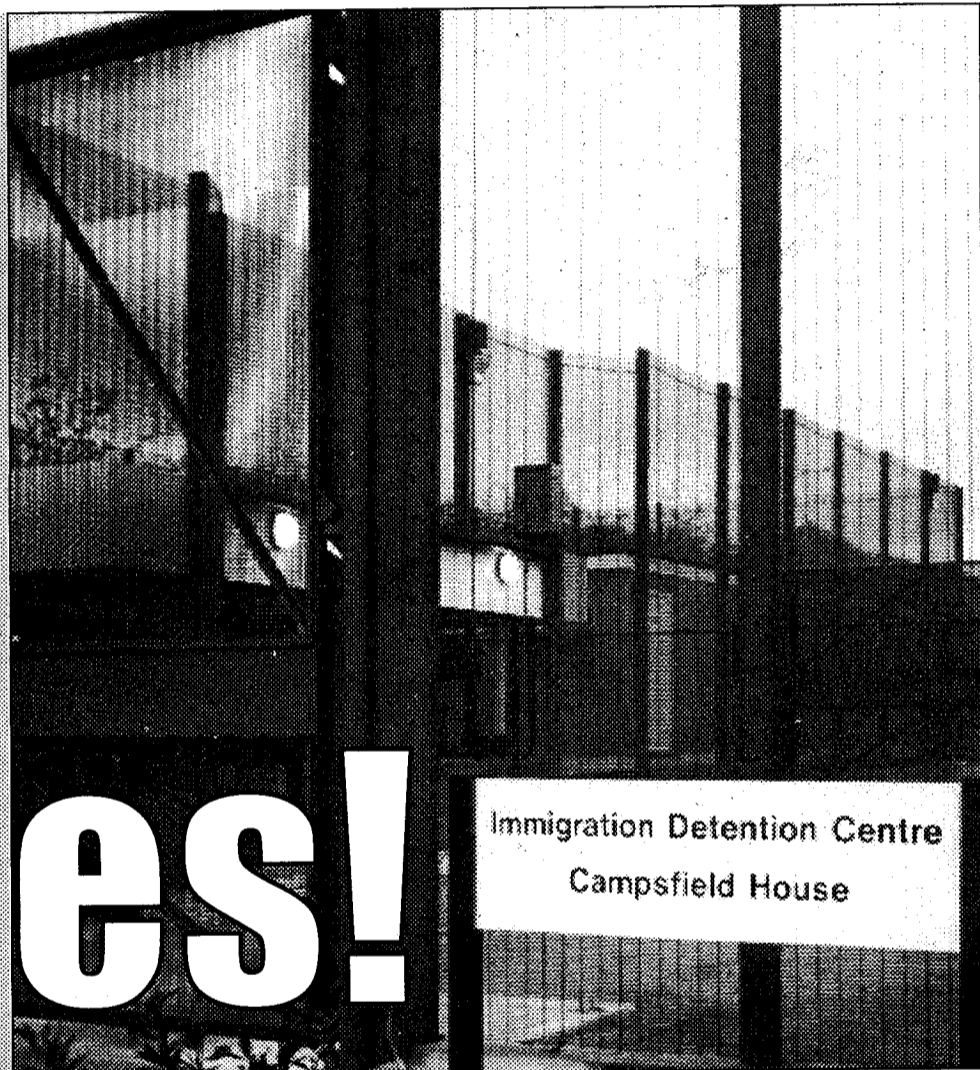
Chomsky explains: "So far, US and Israeli leaders have been unwilling to move as far towards accommodating Palestinian rights as South African advocates of Apartheid did 35 years ago..."

# Socialist

A monthly marxist review. No 30, Winter 1999. 50p

# Outlook

# Stop Jailing Refugees!



National Protest  
"Close Down  
Campsfield"

Saturday Nov 27

6th Anniversary

Demonstration 12.00pm to  
2.00pm Main gate, Campsfield  
Detention Centre Langford  
Lane, Kidlington, Oxford

Picket Harmonsworth  
Detention Centre,

Saturday Dec 11,

12 noon - 1.30pm Take U3 bus  
from Heathrow or 81 bus from  
stop opposite Hounslow West  
tube station. Bring donations  
of phone cards to give to  
refugees

SEE INSIDE, pages 6-7

**You get a much better view  
if you  
read**

**Socialist  
Outlook**

Don't miss an issue: **SUBSCRIBE now!**

20 pages of internationalist news, views and marxist analysis  
each month. 12 issues delivered for just £10. OVERSEAS  
subscribers 12 issues for just £20.

**SPECIAL OFFER (UK only):** One year of **Socialist Outlook**,  
PLUS one year of *International Viewpoint* (Fourth  
International magazine) for only £30.

PLEASE send me

12 issues of **Socialist Outlook**

12 issues of **Socialist Outlook** plus *International  
Viewpoint*.

I enclose £...

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Post Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

**SEND TO: Socialist Outlook,  
PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU**

